**Care & Help, LLC. Home Care Agency**

**1051 County Line Rd.**

**Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006**

**Tel: (267) 778-9180 ~ Fax: (215) 689-4274**

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**Tuberculosis (TB)**

Tuberculosis, or TB is a highly contagious lung disease caused by bacterium that is carried on mucus droplets suspended in the air. TB is an airborne disease. When a person who is infected with TB talks, coughs, breathes, sings, laughs, or sneezes, he may release mucus droplets carrying the disease. TB usually infects lungs, causing coughing, trouble breathing, fever, weight loss, and fatigue, spreading in your body, causing tissue damage. Usually TB can be cured by taking all prescribed medication. However, if left untreated TB can cause death.

There are two types of TB:

* **Latent TB Infection**- Someone with latent TB infection carries the disease but does not show symptoms and cannot infect others. However, if TB bacteria become active and multiply in the body, LATENT TB infection progresses to TB Disease.
* **TB Disease-** A person with TB disease shows symptoms of the disease and can spread TB to others.

The signs and symptoms of TB disease include the following:

* Fatigue
* Loss of appetite
* Weight loss
* Slight fever and chills
* Night sweats
* Prolonged coughing, lasting more than 3 weeks
* Coughing up blood
* Chest pain
* Shortness of breath
* Trouble breathing

A **Chest X-RAY** and other tests are needed to diagnose TB disease.

TB is more likely to be spread in small, confined, or poorly ventilated places. TB is more likely to develop in those people whose immune systems are weakened by illness, malnutrition, alcoholism, or drug abuse. People with Cancer or HIV/AIDS are more susceptible to developing TB disease, d/t weakened immune system.

**Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** is a type of TB that can develop when a person with TB disease does not take all prescribed medication. **Resistant** means drugs no longer work to kill the specific bacteria. When the full course of medication is not taken, bacteria remain in the body and are less likely to be killed by TB medication. If the TB bacilli develop resistance to drugs that treat TB, fighting the disease is becoming more difficult. Surgery may be the only option for treatment. However, if the disease is widespread throughout both lungs, surgery may not be possible.

**Most Common TB Drugs:**

If you have latent tuberculosis, you may need to take just one type of TB drug. Active tuberculosis, particularly if it's a drug-resistant strain, will require several drugs at once the most common medications used to treat tuberculosis include:

* Isoniazid
* Rifampin (Rifadin, Rimactane)
* Ethambutol (Myambutol)
* Pyrazinamide

If you have drug-resistant TB, a combination of antibiotics called Fluoroquinolones and injectable medications, such as Amikacin, Kanamycin or Capreomycin, are generally used for 20 to 30 months. Some types of TB are developing resistance to these medications as well.

A number of new drugs are being looked at as add-on therapy to the current drug-resistant combination treatment, including:

* Bedaquiline
* Linezolid

**Medications side effects:**

Serious side effects of TB drugs aren't common but can be dangerous when they do occur. All tuberculosis medications can be highly toxic to your liver. When taking these medications, call your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:

* Nausea or vomiting
* Loss of appetite
* A yellow color to your skin (jaundice)
* Dark urine
* A fever that lasts three or more days

Guidelines:

* Follow Standard and Airborne precautions.
* Wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) as instructed. Special masks, such as **N95** or **HEPA** (High Efficiency Particulate Air), or other masks must be used. These masks filter out small particles, such as bacteria that cause TB. You must be fit-tested for these special masks. Training is needed on how to use those masks.
* Use special care when handling sputum or phlegm. **Phelgm** is thick mucus from respiratory passage.
  + If patient lives in a facility, they are placed in a special room with NEGATIVE AIR PRESSURE ROOM or ACID-FAST BACILLUS ISOLATION ROOM (AFB). When entering that kind of room, don’t open or close the door too quickly. This pulls contaminated room air into hallway. The door should remain closed as much as possible.
* Instruct patient to wear a facemask when exiting the room, avoid coming into close contact with others, and practice respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
* Help the patient to remember to take all medication as prescribed**. Failure to take all medication as prescribed is a major factor in spread of TB.**