

## Forte Residential and Forte Home Health Care, Inc. Tuberculosis (TB) Training

### What is TB?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but they can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. Because not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection and TB disease. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

### TB Risk Factors

Some people can develop TB disease within weeks after becoming infected, while others may get sick years later. Overall, 5-10% of people with latent TB infection who do not receive treatment will develop TB disease at some time in their lives. People considered high risk for developing TB disease fall into two categories:

- People recently infected with TB bacteria
- People with medical conditions that weaken the immune system

### Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms depend on where the bacteria are located in the body. TB bacteria usually grow in the lungs and may cause symptoms such as:

- A bad cough lasting 3 weeks or longer
- Pain in the chest
- Coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs)

Other symptoms of TB disease are:

- Weakness or fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Chills
- Fever
- Sweating at night

People with latent TB infection have no symptoms, don't feel sick, and cannot spread TB bacteria to others.

### How TB Spreads

TB bacteria spread through the air from person to person. Bacteria can get into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings. People nearby may become infected by breathing in these bacteria. People with TB disease are more likely to spread it to people they spend time with daily.

TB is NOT spread by:

- Shaking someone's hand
- Sharing food or drink
- Touching bed linens or toilet seats
- Sharing toothbrushes
- Kissing

When providing care for someone with infectious TB disease, airborne precautions should be implemented. TB disease in other parts of the body such as the kidney, spine, or brain are normally not infectious.

### TB Prevention

Many people live with latent TB infection and never develop active TB disease. People more likely to develop TB disease from latent TB infection are:

- People with HIV/AIDS
- People who were infected with TB bacteria within the previous 2 years
- Babies and young children
- People who inject illegal drugs
- People with illness or who have weakened immune systems
- Elderly
- People who were untreated or not treated properly for TB in the past

Medication is available for people with latent TB infection that are in these high-risk groups.

All personnel should receive treatment for latent TB infection, unless treatment is contraindicated. If untreated, TB symptom screening should be completed annually. If TB disease is suspected, the local health department should be notified immediately.

TB disease is much more common in many other countries. Travelers who anticipate exposure to people with TB disease should have a TB skin or blood test completed prior to leaving the United States. If negative, the test should be repeated 8-10 weeks after returning to the United States. Annual testing may be encouraged for people who have repeated exposures.

### Exposure to TB

All personnel with a known exposure to someone with TB disease should receive TB symptom screening and timely testing, if indicated. The local health department should be contacted and made aware of exposure details. TB disease requires treatment with several drugs, whereas latent TB infection is treated much more easily.

### TB training acknowledgement

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