PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

HOME ISOLATION FOR TB

To contain the spread of an infectious illness, public health authorities rely on many strategies. One of these strategies is **home isolation**. This is a common practice in public health that aims to control exposure to an infectious (able to spread germs to others) or potentially infectious person. This may be undertaken voluntarily or mandated by public health authorities under law by the State of Michigan. This information with help you understand more about TB and what home isolation involves.

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread from person to person through the air. TB germs are put into the air when you have TB germs in your lungs or throat and you cough, sneeze, laugh or sing. People who are near you can breathe in the TB germs and become infected. TB is **not** spread on clothing, linen, furniture or toilets or by shaking hands. You cannot spread TB on eating utensils, plates, or cups.

What is home isolation?

Your doctor is sending you home on "home isolation". This means you are not sick enough to need hospital care, but you are still infectious. Home isolation helps prevent the spread of TB because you stay home and away from other people while you are infectious.

While you are on home isolation:

- Stay at home unless you need medical care. You should put off all non-emergency appointments (dentist, hairdresser, etc.) until you are no longer infectious.
- If you must go to the doctor, **wear a mask and tell the doctor's office staff you have TB**.
- If you have to be picked up by ambulance, **tell the paramedics you have TB** .
- Do not have visitors. Stay away from people who do not live with you. Infants, young children, and people with weak immune systems (cancer patients, people with HIV, people who have had an organ transplant) can catch TB very easily.
- **If you must be around other people while inside, wear a mask at all times.**
- You may be outside in the open air without a mask. It is harder for TB germs to infect others outside; TB germs are killed by sunlight.
- You may not ride in taxis, buses, trains, or airplanes.
- You may not go to school, work, church, the store or any other public place.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough, sneeze, or laugh. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Sleep alone in a separate room
- Air out the room you are staying in by opening the window when the weather allows. You can also put a fan in the open window backwards so the air is blown outside.

How long will I need to be on home isolation?

Home isolation is different for each person. Home isolation may last days, weeks, or months. The contagious period of your TB depends on how well your body responds to treatment. This will be based on the results of your sputum tests, x-rays and decreasing symptoms. Taking every dose of your TB medicine kills the TB germs and will help you get off isolation sooner. The health department will tell you when you are no longer contagious and may resume activities such as work, school, or shopping.