



Tuberculosis

Last update: 2023-06-23

Key facts

- Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*)
- TB most often affects the lungs.
- Tuberculosis is both curable and preventable.

Transmission

- TB is spread from person to person through the air.
- When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air. A person needs to inhale only a few of these germs to become infected.

Most vulnerable to severe consequences

- People living with HIV or suffering from other conditions that decrease people's immune defences, such as diabetes, are especially vulnerable.
- Children are vulnerable because of their weaker immune systems.

Most vulnerable to contracting the disease

- Tuberculosis mostly affects adults. However, all age groups are at risk.
- People living in crowded and poorly ventilated spaces where there are people with infectious TB. These can include prisoners, migrants and socially marginalized people.
- People who are infected with HIV are 18 times more likely to develop active TB.
- People with undernutrition are 3 times more at risk.
- Alcohol use disorder and tobacco smoking increase the risk of TB.

Symptoms

- Cough with sputum and blood at times
- Chest pains
- Weakness
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Night sweats

What can you do to prevent and control an epidemic?

Prevention and control

- Community awareness and identifying people suspected to have TB
 - Inform communities on main symptoms of TB
 - Identify people with TB symptoms in the community
- Promote basic precautionary measures for infection control and social distance advice at family and community levels

Treatment and management

- Identify and refer symptomatic cases to health facilities.
- Provide psychosocial support to those under treatment and their family members.
- Support people with TB in your community to adhere to treatment. That is, to take medication according to the recommendations of a health care provider. Adherence is important for people with TB to get better, to control the spread of infection, and to minimize drug resistance.

Social mobilization and health education / promotion

- Priority health education target groups are at risk groups and those who are sick with TB and their families.
- Stigma against TB and TB/HIV should be strongly addressed

Mapping and community assessment

- Make a map of the community.
- Mark the following information on the map:
 - How many people identified with TB symptoms? Where?
 - How many people have been referred to health services?
 - Who and where are the vulnerable people?
 - Where are the local health facilities and services?
 - Where do people obtain their medication?
- Record the following information on the back of the map:
 - When did people start to observe TB symptoms?
 - How many people live in the affected community? How many are children under five years?
 - Are there people in the area living with HIV?
 - What are the community's knowledge, practices and beliefs about TB and TB-HIV coinfection?
 - Amongst those people with TB, what are the knowledge, concerns and beliefs about TB treatment?
 - Is a social mobilization or health promotion programme in place?
 - Are TB treatment services accessible?
 - Which sources do people use/trust the most for information?
 - Are there rumours or misinformation about TB
 - What are the rumours?