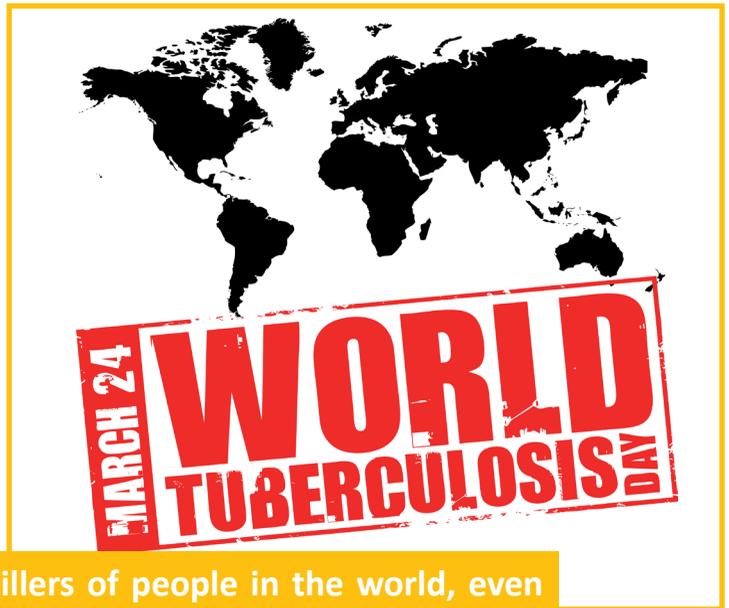


# TB: Know the facts



Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the top killers of people in the world, even though it is entirely curable and preventable. March is TB Awareness Month and 24 March marks World TB Day, an international event to promote awareness so that we can spread the facts, and not the disease.

## What is TB?

TB is an infectious disease caused by a germ called *mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It usually attacks the lungs, but can attack almost any part of the body. TB spreads through the air from person to person via coughing and sneezing, most easily in closed spaces without adequate ventilation and over a long period of time.

TB is usually spread between family members, close friends, and people who live or work together, not via casual contact. If someone does become infected with TB, it's important to note that this doesn't necessarily mean they will get the disease because their body's defences are there to protect them.

TB may cause a variety of different symptoms, the most common being a combination of cough with sputum (phlegm) and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats.

## Who is most at risk?

- People with compromised immune systems such as those living with HIV, malnutrition, or diabetes, and people who smoke have a much

higher risk of falling ill.

- People who are infected with HIV are 26-31 times more likely to fall ill from TB and 1 in 4 people who are HIV-positive and have TB die, making it the leading killer of HIV-positive people.
- Children under the age of five or HIV-positive individuals who have been exposed to TB may need preventative medication with TB drugs. These medications are taken for six months or more to ensure that the person exposed to TB does not develop active TB infection.

The symptoms for TB may be mild for months, causing many people to delay seeking medical care. Unfortunately this means that they can infect others. A person with TB can infect up to 15 people in a year.

If you start feeling unwell and are showing some of the symptoms associated with TB, seek medical advice.

## The curable disease

TB is a treatable and curable disease, and the vast majority of cases can be cured when medication is provided and taken properly.