

Understanding and Combating Tuberculosis in the African Region.

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Tuberculosis (TB) is an [infectious disease](#) that most often affects the lungs and is caused by a type of bacteria. It spreads through the air when infected people cough, sneeze, or spit. Tuberculosis (TB) has become [the leading reason for deaths from a single infectious agent](#), surpassing HIV/AIDS. While it affects adults the most in their productive years, it doesn't choose an age group – everyone is at risk. Sadly, over 80% of TB cases and deaths happen in countries with less money, showing how unfair health chances are around the world.

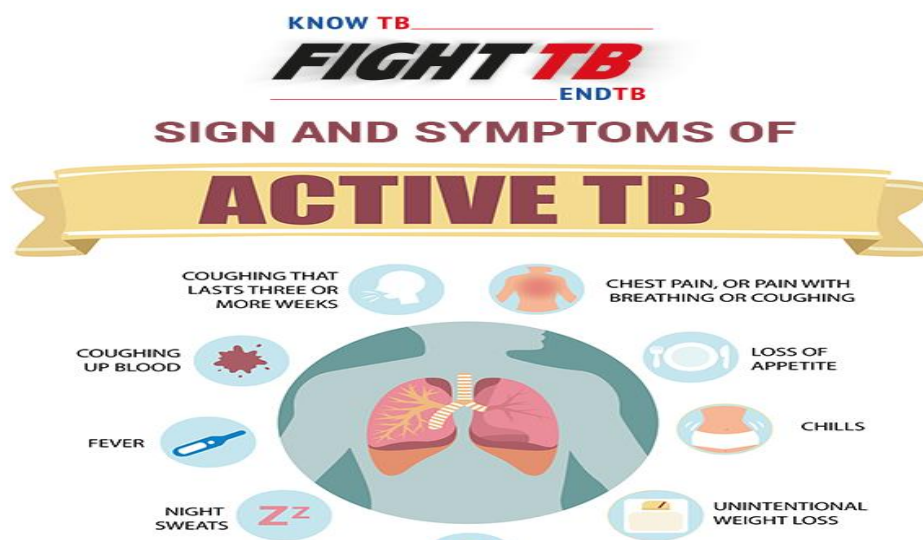


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State of TB in the African Region

In the African Region, the impact of COVID-19 on the number of people diagnosed and officially reported with TB has been limited. [The count of newly diagnosed TB cases and those reported to national authorities decreased slightly from 1.44 million in 2019 to 1.41 million in 2020.](#) However, there was a rise to 1.51 million in 2021, although this change varied across different countries. Some nations witnessed higher notifications in both 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019. A prominent example is Nigeria. [On the other hand, Angola and Lesotho faced a decline in 2020, followed by a further decrease in 2021.](#) Congo, Sierra Leone, and Uganda experienced a downturn in 2020 but showed signs of recovery, reaching or surpassing 2019 levels in 2021. Notably, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia reported increased TB notifications in both 2020 and 2021.

Causes of Tuberculosis

TB is [caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*](#). You can get TB by being close to someone who has it and is coughing a lot. When someone with TB coughs, tiny drops that have the bacteria can come out. If you breathe in these drops often for a long time, you might get TB too. Some people have TB germs inside them but don't feel sick or have any problems (this is called latent TB). This kind of TB can't make others sick, but later, it might turn into the active kind of TB.

Common symptoms of Tuberculosis

These are among the common symptoms of TB that one may experience.

- A cough that lasts for more than three weeks and if you're coughing up mucus or mucus with blood, these could be signs of TB.
- Feeling tired all the [time, having a high temperature or night sweats](#).
- losing your appetite, shedding weight unexpectedly, and generally feeling unwell might also be indications of TB.
- Children might have trouble gaining weight or growing if they have TB.
- When TB spreads to other parts of your body like your lymph nodes, bones, or brain, you might experience additional symptoms such as swollen glands, body aches and pains, swollen joints or ankles, stomach or pelvic pain, constipation, dark or cloudy urine, headaches, vomiting, confusion, a stiff neck, or a rash on your legs, face, or other parts of your body.

Prevent tuberculosis infection and spread

- If you have TB, be careful about how you cough. Stay away from others, use a mask, and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw away tissues and mucus safely
- If you have symptoms like a long-lasting cough, fever, and losing weight without knowing why, it's important to see a doctor. [Getting treatment for TB early can help stop it from spreading and make you feel better](#).
- You should get tested for TB infection if your chances of getting it are higher, like if you have HIV or if you're around people with TB at home or work.
- If you're given medicine to prevent TB, make sure to take all of it, even if you start feeling better.

Can TB be treated?

- [Yes, Tuberculosis \(TB\) can be treated! If someone is diagnosed with TB](#), they can take medicines prescribed by a doctor to get better. These medicines are very important because they help kill the germs that cause TB in the body.
- When someone takes these medicines, it's called TB treatment. It's important to follow the doctor's instructions and take all the medicines exactly as they say, even if the person starts feeling better. This is because TB bacteria can be tough and might not go away completely if the medicines aren't taken for the full time.

- TB treatment [usually lasts for several months](#), often around 6 to 9 months. It's essential to finish the entire course of treatment to make sure the TB bacteria are completely gone from the body. If someone stops taking the medicines too soon, the TB bacteria might come back and become harder to treat.
- It's also important to have [regular check-ups](#) with the doctor during treatment. The doctor will make sure the person is getting better and that the medicines are working. With proper treatment and following the doctor's advice, TB can be cured, and the person can go back to their normal life without the worry of spreading TB to others.

WHO efforts to fight against Tuberculosis in the African Region

WHO is working closely with countries, partners, and civil society in scaling up the TB response

- providing global leadership to end TB through strategy development, political and multisectoral engagement, strengthening review and accountability, advocacy, and partnerships, including with civil society.
- shaping the TB [research and innovation agenda and stimulating](#) the generation, translation, and dissemination of knowledge.
- setting norms and standards on TB prevention and care and promoting and facilitating their implementation.
- ensuring the provision of specialized technical support to Member States and partners jointly with WHO regional and country offices, catalyzing change, and building sustainable capacity; and
- monitoring and reporting on the status of the TB epidemic and progress in financing and implementation of the response at global, regional, and country levels.

References

[Tuberculosis](#)

[iAHO regional TB fact sheet](#)

[NHS: Causes of Tuberculosis](#)

[CDC: Treatment for TB disease](#)