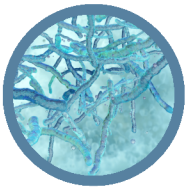

DISEASE 101:

Tuberculosis

SABIN VACCINE INSTITUTE

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It most often affects the lungs, but can also involve the kidneys, brain, spine, skin and other organs after spread through the bloodstream.

Did You Know?

Babies and children are at higher risk of developing active TB disease if they are infected. Other conditions can increase risk of TB, such as diabetes, weakened immune system (such as people with HIV), undernutrition, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol use.

SPECIAL ANTIBIOTICS ARE DEPLOYED TO TREAT BOTH TB INFECTION AND DISEASE.

In certain countries, a vaccine is given to babies or small children to protect against TB. However, the vaccine does not work as well for adults, and TB vaccine development is considered an important goal globally.

Disease Transmission

The bacteria that causes TB spreads through the air when people with the disease cough, sneeze, or spit.

Source: WHO and CDC | Updated: May 2026

Symptoms

Symptoms of TB may be mild for months, allowing people to spread the infection to others without knowing it. Symptoms depend on what part of the body is affected and include prolonged cough (sometimes with blood), chest pain, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, fever, and night sweats.

PROLONGED COUGH

CHEST PAIN

WEAKNESS

FATIGUE

WEIGHT LOSS

FEVER

NIGHT SWEATS

By the Numbers

Globally, TB is the world's leading cause of death from a single infectious agent and among the top 10 causes of death.

A total of

1.23 MILLION

people died from TB in 2024 alone.