

Yes! We Can End TB

World Tuberculosis Day is observed on 24 March every year to raise awareness about *tuberculosis* and efforts to end the ongoing epidemic. On the 100th anniversary of Dr Robert Koch's announcement, in 1982, the first official World Tuberculosis Day was observed. World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, 24 March 2024, continues with the theme "Yes! We Can End TB". TB is still one of the world's deadliest diseases and recent years have seen a worrying increase in drug-resistant TB.

- Each day, close to 3,560 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.
- Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 75 million lives since the year 2000. There was a significant worldwide recovery in the scale-up of TB diagnosis and treatment services in 2022.
- In its latest Global Tuberculosis Report, World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted that more than 7.5 million people with TB received access to diagnosis and treatment in 2022, the most since monitoring began almost 30 years ago.
- However, progress was insufficient to meet the global TB targets set in 2018 with disruptions caused by the pandemic and ongoing conflicts being major contributing factors.

World Tuberculosis Day 2024, titled 'Yes! We Can End TB', conveys a message of hope that the epidemic of tuberculosis can be turned tide by increasing investments and implementing new WHO recommendations.

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is being celebrated to raise awareness around the disease, increase efforts to eradicate the disease, and mobilize support for those affected by TB. With continued efforts and awareness campaigns, the aim is to eradicate the world's deadliest disease.

March 24, 1882, is considered a significant date in the battle against tuberculosis as it is on this day that Dr Robert Koch discovered the bacteria that causes TB. This groundbreaking announcement led to a better understanding, diagnosis, and eventual treatment of the disease. It was not until the year 1982, on the centenary of Dr Koch's discovery that the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) proposed observing March 24 as World TB Day to raise awareness about TB and its global impact. The first World TB Day was officially observed in 1983, and since then, it has become an annual event.

The day is an annual reminder to continue with the research and investment on treatment strategies, prevention methods and awareness around tuberculosis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about a quarter of the global population is estimated to have been infected with TB bacteria. About 5–10% of people infected with TB will eventually get symptoms and develop TB disease. World Tuberculosis Day aims to unite governments, health organizations, and communities worldwide in their commitment to ending the TB epidemic by ensuring access to quality care for all those affected. The significance of World Tuberculosis Day is to highlight the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis to prevent the spread of the disease. It also aims to promote public awareness about the myths and misconceptions associated with tuberculosis, which are prevalent in many parts of the world. The day provides an opportunity to emphasize the need for high-level leadership, increased investment, and faster implementation of new WHO recommendations to combat tuberculosis.

World Tuberculosis Day is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the diverse impact of tuberculosis on individuals, families, and communities. It is a day to remember the lives that have been lost to the disease and to show support for those who are living with tuberculosis. World Tuberculosis Day provides a platform to promote positive messages of hope and to highlight the progress made in the fight against the epidemic.

To achieve global TB control and eventually elimination, we need several actions: increased investments to accelerate the promising new TB vaccine pipeline, implementation of new immune strategies for better vaccine design, new therapies and/or therapy regimens, new diagnostic tests, implementation of prevention through screening using standardized old and new diagnostic tests for TB infection detection, implementation of non-sputum diagnostic tests for TB disease, and implementation of tests for the identification of those progressing toward TB disease to better target those needing therapy.

The global community must reflect on the historical, social, philosophical, and political factors that have led to a failure in TB control for the past century. The rates of TB in Europe and the United States started to decline well before the advent of TB drugs and this was attributable to improved housing conditions, living standards, and nutrition. However, such improvements are not universally accessible, and TB remains an epidemic of injustice and a paradigm for health inequality. Re-establishment of our commitments is required to bring TB control efforts back on track to achieve the WHO and STOP TB 2025 targets. Governments in low- and medium-income countries must invest more in TB control efforts and link them to the WHO Sustainable Development Goals of reducing poverty, poor housing, and malnutrition. Only then can we say, "Yes! We Can End TB."

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