



# Subclinical Tuberculosis

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## Why in News?

Subclinical [Tuberculosis \(TB\)](#) is a growing concern in India, contributing to the slow **decline in TB incidence rates** despite advances in detection and treatment.

## What is Subclinical Tuberculosis?

- **Definition:** Subclinical TB refers to a form of **TB infection where individuals do not exhibit the typical symptoms** of the disease, such as a persistent cough.
  - This makes it harder to detect compared to active TB, which presents with more apparent symptoms.
- **Detection:** It is often identified through imaging techniques like **chest X-rays or molecular tests**, as it may not be noticeable through routine symptom-based screenings.
- **Prevalence:** Subclinical TB accounted for **42.6% of cases in the National TB Prevalence Survey (2019-2021)**, with similar findings in Tamil Nadu (39%).
  - Although asymptomatic, individuals with subclinical **TB can still spread the bacteria to others.**
  - High-burden countries, including India, have a **considerable proportion of subclinical TB, which remains largely undetected**, thus sustaining the transmission of the disease.
  - Countries like Vietnam have successfully reduced TB prevalence by screening entire populations **using X-rays and molecular tests, regardless of symptoms.**
    - Implementing similar large-scale screening in India would require strategic shifts, including mobile units and community engagement.
- **Impact:** This form of TB can contribute to the slow decline in overall TB incidence rates, as it remains largely undetected and untreated.

## What are the Key Facts About Tuberculosis?

- **About:** TB is an infectious disease caused by ***Mycobacterium tuberculosis***, that mainly affects the **lungs**. It spreads through the **air when infected people cough, sneeze or spit.**
- **Symptoms:** Prolonged cough, chest pain, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, fever, and night sweats.
  - Diabetes, weakened immune system, malnutrition, tobacco use can increase the risk of TB disease.
- **Prevention:** Seek medical attention, get tested if at risk, early treatment. The **Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine** helps prevent TB outside the lungs but not in the lungs.
- **Prevalence and Treatment:** About 25% of the global population has been infected with TB bacteria. **5-10% of these infections progress to active TB disease.**
  - TB is preventable and curable with **antibiotics**, typically including **isoniazid, rifampin, pyrazinamide, ethambutol, and streptomycin.**
  - **Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** is caused by bacteria resistant to first-line drugs, treatable with costly and toxic second-line drugs.
    - MDR-TB remains a public health crisis, with only about **2 in 5 people accessing treatment in 2022.**

- **TB and HIV:** People living with [HIV \(human immunodeficiency virus\)](#) are **16 times more likely to develop TB**. TB is the leading cause of death among people with HIV.
  - Without proper treatment, **60% of HIV-negative people with TB and nearly all HIV-positive people with TB will die.**
- **Impact:** TB disproportionately affects adults in low and middle-income countries, with over **80% of cases and deaths occurring in these regions**. The highest burden is in the [World Health Organization's \(WHO\)](#) South-East Asian and African Regions.
  - A total of 1.3 million people died from TB in 2022 (including 167 000 people with HIV). Worldwide, TB is the second leading infectious killer after Covid-19.
- **Initiatives Related to TB:**
  - **India:**
    - [The National TB Elimination Programme \(NTEP\) to Eliminate TB by 2025.](#)
    - [Ni-kshay Mitra Initiative.](#)
    - [Direct Benefit Transfer \(DBT\)](#) provided to TB patients.
    - [TB-Mukt Panchayat Initiative:](#) Launched to leverage the support of over 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats to increase TB awareness, eliminate stigma, and improve service uptake.
    - [Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan \(PMTBMBA\)](#)
- **Global:**
  - **The Global Tuberculosis Programme by the [World Health Organization](#)** works towards the goal of a world free of TB, with zero deaths, disease and suffering due to the disease.
  - Global Plan to End TB 2023-2030 is a plan to end tuberculosis as a public health challenge by 2030, in line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).
    - **SDG 3 aims** to prevent needless suffering from **preventable diseases and premature death** by focusing on key targets that boost the health of a country's overall population.
  - [Global Tuberculosis Report.](#)

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# Tuberculosis

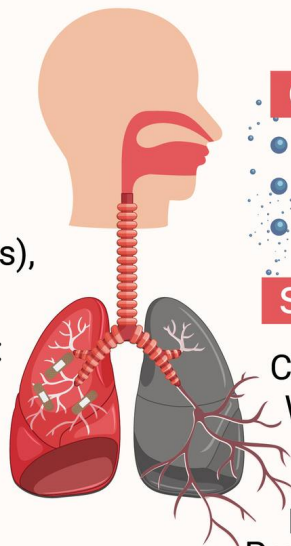


**Drishti IAS**

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that affects the lungs. Tuberculosis is preventable and curable.

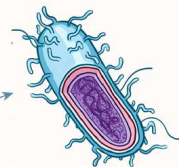
## Prevention

- Seek medical intervention if symptoms persist
- If at a higher risk (HIV patients), get tested for TB.
- Practice good cough hygiene: Wear a mask and avoid contact



## Causes:

- *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*
- Coughing droplets
- Prolonged exposure from a patient



## Symptoms of TB:

Chest pain  
Weakness  
Weight loss  
Fever  
Night sweats  
Prolonged cough

## Facts

- 1.6 million deaths in 2021 Worldwide
- 13<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death
- India aims to achieve the UN's TB-related SDGs by 2025, five years ahead of the global target to end the TB epidemic by 2030.

#Tuberculosis

## Ni-kshay Programme

- Nikshay Mitra are individuals or groups who adopt one TB patient for their treatment for a period of 6 months
- Provision of free drugs and diagnostics
- Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana for nutritional support to TB patients

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. Which of the following diseases can be transmitted from one person to another through tattooing? (2013)**

1. Chikungunya
2. Hepatitis B
3. HIV-AIDS

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/subclinical-tuberculosis>

