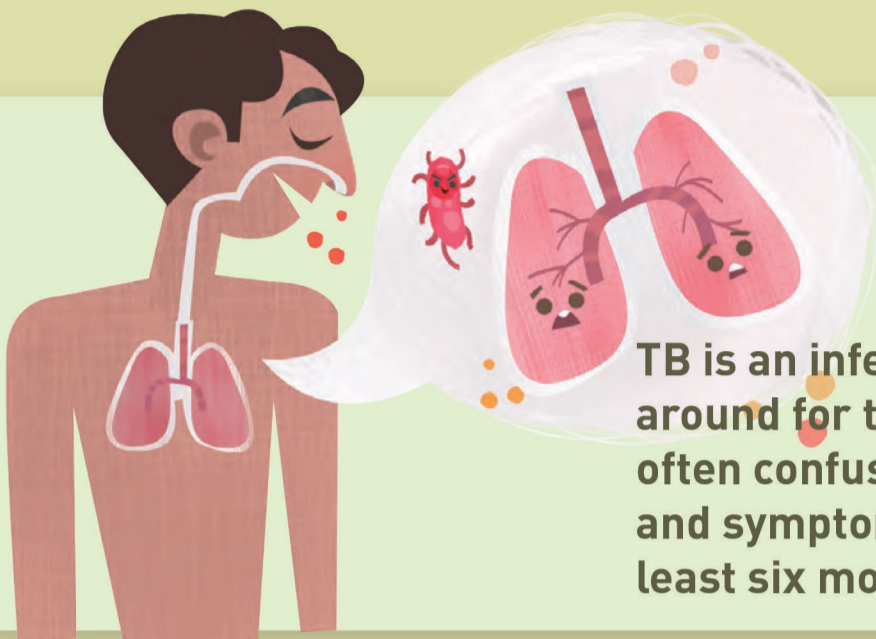


# TUBERCULOSIS

*An Old and Ongoing Epidemic*



## What is tuberculosis?

TB is an infectious disease caused by bacteria, and has been around for thousands of years. It mainly affects the lungs and is often confused with pneumonia, because they have common signs and symptoms. TB recovery is very slow, and treatment lasts at least six months.

## HOW DO YOU GET TUBERCULOSIS?

The TB bacteria is passed through the air. But some are at greater risk, such as people living in crowded conditions, those with weak immune systems, poor health or poor diet due to lifestyle and other problems. It's also very possible to catch TB more than once.



## CAN TUBERCULOSIS KILL YOU?

TB can be fatal if not treated properly. If you do not finish the recommended treatment, you can also develop drug-resistant TB, or DR-TB, which is more difficult to treat. Treatment is also more difficult if you are immunocompromised, or you have another condition like HIV or diabetes.

## HOW CAN YOU PREVENT OR TREAT TUBERCULOSIS?

If you have latent TB infection, you may need medication to reduce risks of developing TB disease later.

If you have TB disease, treatment will take at least six months, possibly as long as one year. It is very important that you complete the course of treatment, and take the drugs exactly as you are told. Otherwise, the bacteria may become difficult to treat and may result in DR-TB.

## WHAT IS DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS DOING ABOUT TUBERCULOSIS?

Doctors Without Borders provides TB care in various settings, such as conflict areas, refugee camps and prison settings. There are also projects integrating HIV and TB or diabetes services, DR-TB treatment etc. In Papua New Guinea, TB is the second-highest cause of death; since 2014, Doctors Without Borders has treated more than 7,100 patients with drug-sensitive TB and over 200 with drug-resistant TB. In the Philippines, Doctors Without Borders is opening a project on TB patient education and screening in the urban slums of Tondo, Manila.

Critical to TB care is access to medication. When bedaquiline was first authorised for use in 2012, it was the first DR-TB drug to be developed in more than 40 years. But by late 2018, only 28,700 people had received it worldwide.

Doctors Without Borders spoke out in 2018 to urge Johnson & Johnson (J&J), the pharmaceutical corporation that holds patents on bedaquiline, to ensure affordable access to the drug for everyone who needs it to survive. In July 2020, J&J announced a reduced price of US\$1.50. Doctors Without Borders is still calling on J&J to further reduce the price of bedaquiline and offer it to all countries with a high DR-TB burden, so that more lives can be saved.

