

WHO recommends new diagnostic tools to tackle tuberculosis (TB) globally

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New tools could be truly transformative for tuberculosis, by bringing fast, accurate diagnosis closer to people, saving lives, curbing transmission and reducing costs



On World TB Day, 24th March, the World Health Organization (WHO) is urging countries to accelerate action to end tuberculosis (TB) and expand access to lifesaving services by using new innovations such as diagnostic tests that can be used near the point-of-care and tongue swabs that can help detect the disease faster reaching more people.

The [new guidelines on tests for TB](#) that can be used near the point-of-care, issued by WHO, mark another step towards faster detection and treatment of one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases. These portable, simple-to-use tests bring TB diagnosis closer to where people routinely seek care. Available at less than half the cost of many existing molecular diagnostics, they can help countries expand access to testing. The tests can operate on battery power and deliver results in less than one hour, allowing patients to start treatment sooner.

"These new tools could be truly transformative for tuberculosis, by bringing fast, accurate diagnosis closer to people, saving lives, curbing transmission and reducing costs," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "WHO calls on all countries to scale up access to these and other tools so every person with TB can be reached and treated promptly."

Beyond TB, these devices have the potential to test for other diseases like HIV, mpox, and HPV, making diagnostics more patient-centered, equitable, and aligned with one-stop-shop style services for emerging and circulating diseases.

World TB Day 2026: Countries and communities leading the way

On World TB Day 2026, under the theme "Yes! We can end TB: Led by countries, powered by people", WHO is calling for urgent action to:

- accelerate the roll out of diagnostic technologies that can be used near the point-of-care and other innovations as part of a comprehensive testing network;

- strengthen people-centred TB care with meaningful community leadership and continuous engagement;
- build resilient health systems to safeguard health security;
- tackle the social and economic drivers of TB through multisectoral action;
- protect essential TB services amid global crises and funding constraints.

New sample collection methods to expand TB testing

The guidelines also recommend easy-to-collect tongue swab samples, as well as a cost-saving sputum pooling strategy to increase testing efficiency for TB and rifampicin-resistant TB. Tongue swabs allow adults and adolescents who cannot produce sputum to receive TB testing for the first time, enabling disease detection among people who are at an increased risk of dying from TB. Sputum pooling, where samples from several individuals are combined and tested together, can significantly reduce commodity costs and machine time, leading to faster results for people and TB programmes – an approach specifically recommended when resources are exceptionally constrained.

“Investing in TB is a strategic political and economic choice, generating up to US\$ 43 in health and economic returns for every dollar spent”, said Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO’s Department for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections. “What is required now is decisive leadership, strategic investment and rapid implementation of WHO recommendations and innovations to save lives and protect communities.”

While new diagnostic tools represent a critical step forward, ending TB will require sustained investment in research and innovation. Global funding for TB research remains far below the estimated annual need of around US\$ 5 billion, leaving major gaps in the development of new diagnostics, medicines and vaccines needed to end the epidemic.

WHO is working with partners to accelerate progress through initiatives such as the TB Vaccine Accelerator Council, launched to fast-track the development and equitable access to new TB vaccines by aligning governments, researchers, funders and industry around shared priorities and coordinated investment.

As countries mark World TB Day 2026, WHO urges governments and partners to prioritize TB as a central pillar of health security and universal health coverage.