



香港紅十字會  
HONG KONG RED CROSS

# World Tuberculosis Day



Each year, Stop Tuberculosis (TB) advocates around the world mark the date 24 March as “World TB Day” when the German bacteriologist Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus in 1882. It has been more than 100 years since Koch’s discovery but TB is still a major health problem around the globe, especially in the developing world. It aims to raise public awareness and knowledge about tuberculosis so that it can be prevented and controlled effectively and proactively.

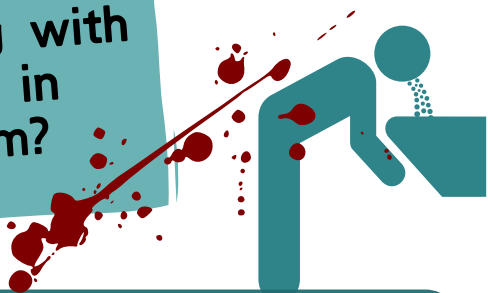


In 1939, TB had been the top killer in Hong Kong. It was the time when a large number of immigrants came to Hong Kong from the mainland. The spread of the disease is very fast due to the densely populated community and poor environmental hygiene. **In recent years, there are still around 4,000 reported cases of TB each year.** The notification figure showed dramatic improvement when compared with the 1950s and 1960s but was still high when compared with the figures of the European and American countries.

## Common myths about tuberculosis

1

**Coughing with blood in sputum?**



Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a **bacterium** called Mycobacterium tuberculosis that usually attacks the lungs. **People who have latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not have any symptoms,** and cannot spread TB to others. In moderate and severe cases, symptoms like persistent coughing, coughing up blood or sputum, weight loss, no appetite, and sweating at night may occur.

2

**Can cold cause tuberculosis?**



Cold and TB are caused by different pathogens. An untreated cold would NOT lead to TB. However, the symptoms during the early stages of TB are similar to those of a common cold. Some TB patients may misjudge their condition as a common cold leading to a delay in diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, we have to stay vigilant when symptoms like coughing occur.

## Transmission route and Incubation period

TB is **spread through the air**. When a person with infective pulmonary tuberculosis coughs or sneezes, the bacteria get into the air and causes disease if a susceptible person inhales it. **The incubation period can be years long**. Symptoms may occur as early as several weeks after infection, or they may occur after many years.



## Prevention

1. Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene.
2. Adopt a healthy lifestyle, i.e., have a balanced diet, adequate exercise, and rest.
3. Keep hands clean and wash hands properly.
4. Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions e.g. after sneezing.
5. Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly.
6. Seek treatment promptly if symptoms similar to tuberculosis appear, particularly persistently cough for more than one month.
7. Receive BCG immunization according to the immunization schedule.



BCG helps to localize infection to the lungs and is effective in protecting against complications of the disease. In Hong Kong, the BCG vaccine is included in the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme.

However, **we cannot solely depend on vaccines to fight TB**. Maintenance of good bodily health and leading a healthy lifestyle are essential preventive measures.

BCG vaccination can offer 100% protection for the children?



All TB patients should be admitted to the hospital for isolation?



The great majority of TB patients can be rendered non-infectious soon after the commencement of treatment. Hence, they can return to work or school soon after the commencement of treatment.