



24 MARCH

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY



FIJI NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

Each year, World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is commemorated on March 24. The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB. His discovery opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.

How does TB spread from person to person?

When a person with TB disease of the lungs spits, coughs or speaks, droplets of TB bacteria spread through the air. People nearby who breathe in the TB bacteria can get TB.

What are some risk factors of contracting TB?

Immunosuppression

A weakened immune system makes it harder for your body to fight infection and more likely that latent TB becomes active. It also makes it more likely to be infected with TB in the first place. You can be immunosuppressed based on any of the following:

Age - The immune systems of the very young and the very old tend to be weak.

Chemotherapy - These treatments fight cancer but also weakens the immune system

HIV/AIDS - As HIV disease worsens or progresses to AIDS, the risk for TB increases

Corticosteroids - Anyone who takes oral steroids long-term, (the equivalent of 15 mg prednisolone for a month or longer), has a weakened immune system.

Lifestyle Factors

Non-medical factors such as low socio-economic status, leading to poor and overcrowded living conditions, poor nutrition and substance abuse are some factors associated with an increased risk of infection

Poor Diet and Nutrition

Poor nutrition plays a role in TB transmission. Severe malnutrition not only weakens the immune system but leads to weight loss. People who are underweight (body mass index

of <18.5) are twice as likely to be infected than people with a higher BMI. Whenever possible, it is important to eat a nutrient-rich diet and to maintain a healthy weight. Poor socioeconomic situations do not always make it possible to do that.

Poor Living Conditions - TB can spread quickly when people are in crowded and poorly ventilated living and working environments. Crowded conditions within a community or even within a household increase that risk considerably.

Substance Abuse - Substance abuse is prevalent among people infected with TB. Smoking cigarettes increases your risk as much as two-fold.

Illicit drug use, whether injection or non-injection, and drinking 40 grams (one pint of wine, three 12-ounce beers, or 4 ounces of distilled liquor like vodka or whiskey) or more of alcohol per day also increase the odds of TB transmission.

What are the symptoms of TB?

People with latent TB infection have no symptoms. But people with TB disease that affects the lungs may have the following symptoms:

- A persistent cough that may bring up blood or sputum
- Chest pain
- Constant body weakness or fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Increasing weight loss
- Chills
- Fever
- Night sweats

When TB disease affects other parts of the body, a person may have other symptoms. If you feel you might be suffering from symptoms of TB, talk to your Unclinic Nurse or Doctor.

They shall be able to assist you with getting a referral to a TB Clinic for TB Testing.

Unclinic Nasinu

Mondays- Fridays | 8.00am - 5.00pm

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