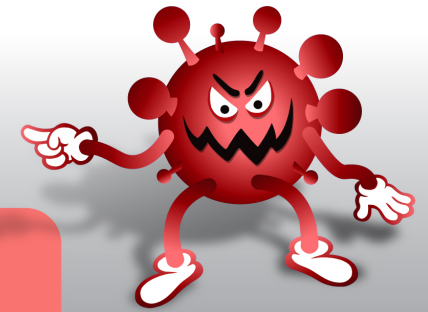


TB & COVID-19



People ill with COVID-19 and TB show similar symptoms such as cough, fever and difficulty breathing. Hence, comparisons between the two are expected. Let us have a look.

	TUBERCULOSIS	COVID-19
How it spreads	Airborne (size of droplets 1–5 µm).	Droplet spread (size of droplets 5-10 µm).
Disease Symptoms	Cardinal symptoms are cough for more than 2 weeks, fever, weight loss, chills, fatigue, night sweats.	Key symptoms are cough, fever and difficulty breathing.
Sample Type	Sputum for Pulmonary TB. Samples from site of disease for Extrapulmonary TB.	Nasal swabs/sputum.
Diagnostics	CBNAAT/Culture/Microscopy.	RT-PCR
Pathogen	Bacteria: Mycobacterium tuberculosis.	SARS Coronavirus-2.
Infectiousness	1 person can infect between 0 to 4 people.	Current average of 2.2 people infected by one person.
Prevention	Preventive therapy for those with close contacts with TB. Good respiratory and hygiene measures.	Social distancing. Good respiratory hygiene measures. Handwashing with soap for at least 20 seconds.
Treatment	Antibiotics. FDC course. Different for Drug-sensitive and Drug-resistant TB.	Supportive treatment currently. Many drug trials underway.
Vaccine	BCG has some protective effect on dangerous forms of TB.	Few vaccines are under trial but none is currently available.

FAQs

Which disease is more deadly?



While TB is responsible for more deaths worldwide making it technically more deadly, it is 100% preventable and curable. We have little information around COVID-19 with drugs and vaccine still under development, which increases concerns around it. More important is to continue practicing preventions against both.

Are recovered PTB patients at higher risk of COVID-19?



Patients who have recovered from PTB usually have left-over lung damage. This may put one at increased risk of developing COVID-19 symptoms as COVID-19 also affects the lungs.

Will TB support services be impacted?



Staff engaged in the TB programme are being drafted in the COVID-19 response. Lab and diagnostic services like rapid molecular tests and cultures may be delayed. Drug stock out and procurement issues may also be experienced. The CTD and STOs are trying their best to ensure that TB patients continue to receive all necessary support.

What is the risk of co-infection?



Having chronic respiratory diseases increases the chances of poor outcomes with COVID. But it is important for TB patients to continue treatment regardless of COVID-19 symptoms.

Source: The Union (www.theunion.org), FAQs on TB and COVID19, Version 1, March 25, 2020



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