

History of World TB Day | TB | CDC

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On March 24, 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB). During this time, TB killed one out of every seven people living in the United States and Europe. Dr. Koch's discovery was the most important step taken toward the control and elimination of this deadly disease. A century later, March 24 was designated World TB Day: a day to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world.



TB Chronicles

As World TB Day 2018 approaches, CDC will honor TB elimination leaders and history-makers through the **TB Chronicles**. The TB Chronicles will depict TB milestones that highlight both how far we have come and how far we have to go towards ending TB.

Until TB is eliminated, World TB Day won't be a celebration. But it is a valuable opportunity to educate the public about the devastation TB can spread and how it can be stopped.

Names for TB + -

What is in a name?



Image of Hippocrates

Johann Schonlein coined the term “tuberculosis” in the 1834, though it is estimated that *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* may have been around as long as 3 million years!

Tuberculosis (TB) was called “phthisis” in ancient Greece, “tabes” in ancient Rome, and “schachepheth” in ancient Hebrew. In the 1700s, TB was called “the white plague” due to the paleness of the patients. TB was commonly called “consumption” in the 1800s even after Schonlein named it tuberculosis. During this time, TB was also called the “Captain of all these men of death.”

During the Middle Ages, TB of the neck and lymph nodes was called “scofula.” Scofula was believed to be a different disease from TB in the lungs.

Today, our names for TB tell us where TB is located (pulmonary, extrapulmonary) and how to treat it (drug-susceptible, drug-resistant, multidrug resistant, and extensively drug-resistant.)

CDC and many organizations around the world are working towards a future where we call TB “history.”

TB in Animals + -

TB is not just a disease found in humans.



Engraved illustration of bison.

TB is a disease that infects animals as well as humans. Archeologists have found TB in the bones of ancient bison in Wyoming. These bison lived over 17,000 years ago.

TB can still be found in many animals in the United States including cattle and deer. Approximately 1 million cattle are tested each year for TB. The cattle at most risk for TB are those that come into contact with wildlife that carry TB (like deer). It is possible for some animals to transmit TB to humans.

TB in Humans + -

TB has been part of the human experience for a long time.

Table 2. Reported tuberculosis morbidity by activity and sociological status, United States and Territories, calendar year 1953

State or Territory	Total cases	NEW CASES		PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION	
		Active and probably active	Latent	Number of cases	Percent of active and probably active cases
Alabama	8,135	1,268	27.9	365	43.1
Alaska	1,523	1,255	242.2	432	42.4
Arizona	1,750	1,274	46.7	287	35.0
California	8,526	8,026	50.4	1,237	40.9
Colorado	1,458	759	38.0	255	33.5
Connecticut	1,728	759	46.9	—	—
Delaware	429	211	35.3	121	39.8
District of Columbia	1,170	1,129	145.0	—	—
Florida	8,426	1,284	35.4	372	40.1
Georgia	2,485	1,860	30.1	759	40.8
Idaho	379	148	17.9	51	34.5
Illinois	4,476	1,746	36.3	498	28.5
Indiana	1,754	1,179	35.3	436	40.2
Iowa	760	458	17.6	245	53.5
Kansas	396	276	15.3	87	31.2
Kentucky	2,425	2,225	75.8	825	37.1
Louisiana	2,479	1,850	35.5	628	33.8
Maine	391	303	40.9	143	47.2
Maryland	2,472	1,717	46.3	596	34.3
Massachusetts	2,492	2,262	40.3	688	30.7
Michigan	5,461	1,795	34.5	569	31.7
Minnesota	2,480	937	27.4	395	42.1
Mississippi	1,494	1,060	33.5	395	37.3
Missouri	2,511	2,115	32.4	762	36.0
Montana	339	337	30.2	135	40.1
Nebraska	868	555	29.7	187	33.9
Nevada	126	125	45.2	50	40.0
New Hampshire	154	125	27.4	41	33.6
New Jersey	1,214	8,360	44.9	—	—
New Mexico	1,433	639	146.1	227	35.4
New York	11,375	11,114	75.0	3,486	31.4
North Carolina	2,485	1,407	35.3	—	—
North Dakota	417	314	35.3	139	44.3
Ohio	4,417	4,400	35.4	1,276	29.0
Oklahoma	1,734	1,350	36.4	497	40.1
Oregon	452	138	33.4	348	36.1
Pennsylvania	7,734	1,400	40.4	—	—
Rhode Island	441	369	35.4	133	35.2
South Carolina	1,275	887	46.5	342	38.6
South Dakota	351	311	35.3	74	23.5
Tennessee	3,448	2,400	46.3	—	—
Texas	3,766	2,402	39.6	1,442	40.8
Utah	147	126	35.9	56	45.2
Vermont	468	139	35.9	76	54.7
Virginia	1,888	2,599	47.8	439	17.3
Washington	2,886	1,405	38.3	596	42.4
West Virginia	1,011	1,437	33.3	313	30.8
Wisconsin	1,438	1,438	44.8	484	33.7
Wyoming	168	66	22.2	29	43.6
Unincorporated United States	106,085	65,050	38.7	—	—
Alaska	175	620	315.4	146	23.5
Hawaii	220	437	108.2	61	14.2
Puerto Rico	1,494	1,451	107.0	237	16.3
United States and Territories	111,116	66,862	35.0	2,017	30.2

1/ Data are per 100,000 estimated midyear population.
 2/ Excludes, exclusive of the city of Chicago.
 3/ Estimated for first 6 months of 1953 by using percent distribution of active and probably active cases reported in the last 6 months of 1953.
 4/ City of New Orleans only.
 5/ Derived for area estimating data.

Image of 1953 CDC TB Surveillance Report.

TB in humans can be traced back to 9,000 years ago in Atlit Yam, a city now under the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Israel. Archeologists found TB in the remains of a mother and child buried together. The earliest written mentions of TB were in India (3,300 years ago) and China (2,300 years ago).

Throughout the 1600-1800s in Europe, TB caused 25% of all deaths. Similar numbers occurred in the United States. In 1889, Dr. Hermann Biggs convinced the New York City Department of Health and Hygiene that doctors should report TB cases to the health department, leading to the first published report on TB in New York City in 1893. CDC published nationwide TB data for the first time in 1953, reporting 84,304 cases of TB in the United States.

CDC publishes TB surveillance data on an annual basis. In 2016, the most recent data available, there were 9,272 reported cases of TB disease in the United States. TB disease is a nationally notifiable disease, however latent tuberculosis infection is not reported to CDC. CDC is researching ways to monitor latent TB infection on a national basis. CDC has a goal of TB elimination in the United States. To reach this goal CDC and partners are intensifying the efforts to treat latent tuberculosis infection in addition to TB disease.

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