

TB FIELD FACT SHEET (2026)

1. Key Definitions & Transmission

- **What is TB?** A bacterial infection caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.
- **Transmission:** Spread through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or conversations.
- **Safety Fact:** It is not spread by shaking hands, sharing food, or touching surfaces.
- **Infected:** Approximately one-third of the world's population is infected with TB bacteria.

2. Latent TB vs. Active TB Disease

| Feature | Latent TB Infection | Active TB Disease |
|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| Symptoms | None | Cough, fever, weight loss, night sweats |
| Infectious? | No | Yes (if in lungs/throat) |
| Skin/Blood Test | Usually positive | Usually positive |
| Chest X-Ray | Usually normal | Often shows abnormalities |

3. Diagnostic Updates

- **Skin Test (Mantoux):** Must be read 48-72 hours after injection.
- **Blood Test (IGRA):** Preferred for those who received the BCG vaccine to avoid false positives.
- **Sputum Culture:** The "gold standard" but takes up to 4 weeks because TB is slow-growing.

4. Modern Treatment Timelines

- **Drug-Susceptible TB:** Standard treatment is 6 months; some may qualify for a newer 4-month regimen (Rifapentine-moxifloxacin).
- **Latent TB:** Short-course treatments of 3-4 months (Rifampin or Rifapentine) are now preferred over 9-month regimens.
- **MDR-TB:** Requires specialized antibiotics for up to 2 years.

5. Prevention & Support

- **Ventilation:** Open windows and use fans to move air from inside to outside.

- **Adherence:** Patients must finish the entire course even if they feel better to prevent drug resistance.
- **Directly Observed Therapy (DOT):** Meeting with a health worker to watch the patient take medicine ensures the best outcomes.

CHW Quick Checklist

- Is the patient coughing for more than 3 weeks?
- Does the patient have HIV or a weakened immune system? (Higher risk)
- Is there a plan for DOT or digital treatment support?
- Have family members (contacts) been screened?

References

World Health Organization. (2025). Global tuberculosis report 2025. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240116924>

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