



March 24, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

[World TB Day](#) is observed annually on March 24th to commemorate Dr. Robert Koch's announcement of his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes tuberculosis (TB). On this World TB Day let us celebrate our progress while re-committing to ending TB in the United States and globally. I recognize that many of our colleagues are also engaged in the response to [COVID-19](#), and want to express an extra special thank you for your continued hard work and dedication during these difficult times.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) leads a state-of-the-art national TB program for the United States, which has achieved one of the lowest TB rates in the world. CDC's domestic TB program also conducts clinical trials and epidemiologic research that contributes to guidelines and strategies for eliminating TB globally. In 2019, CDC reported a total of [8,920 new TB disease cases](#) in the United States, a rate of 2.7 per 100,000 – the lowest number of U.S. cases since reporting began in 1953 through the National TB Surveillance System. This success is a result of ongoing, national investment in our nation's public health system and TB research, prevention, and control programs.

CDC's [domestic](#) work in the United States supports a dual approach to end TB by diagnosing and treating every case of infectious TB disease and preventing future cases through expanded testing and treatment for people with [latent TB infection](#). As you know, people with latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not show symptoms of TB disease, and cannot spread the bacteria to others. However, without treatment, the bacteria can become active, and they can develop TB disease. Up to 13 million people in the United States have latent TB infection — and most do not know it. Today, more than 80 percent of the nation's TB disease cases result from untreated latent TB infection. CDC is working to make testing for latent TB infection a routine part of primary care for patients at risk.

The agency and the National Tuberculosis Controllers Association recently published [new treatment guidelines](#) for persons diagnosed with latent TB infection. These combined efforts help protect people and slows the development of multi-drug or extensively drug-resistant TB. CDC continues researching new TB diagnostics, treatments, and approaches through the TB Trials Consortium and TB Epidemiologic Studies Consortium.

Worldwide, TB remains the world's deadliest infectious disease killer with an estimated 10 million people developing TB disease each year, and approximately 4,100 persons losing their lives every day. [Globally](#), CDC is on the frontlines in the world's highest burden countries to find, cure, and prevent all forms of TB. Our work helps to expand access to improved diagnostic methods; strengthen and expand laboratory capacity, surveillance systems, and prevention and treatment programs; and build workforce and research capacity.

As part of the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, in 2019, CDC was instrumental in starting more than 1.1 million people on TB preventive treatment (TPT). Partnering with the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease, CDC recently launched the Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Child and Adolescent TB Centre of Excellence, a virtual network of TB professionals and organizations that will come together to integrate TB screening into routine pediatric health care, identify the best diagnostic methods for TB in children, scale-up TPT for children, and use quality pediatric data to inform policies and practices in African countries.

CDC is committed on World TB Day and every day because it is time to:

- Test and treat latent TB infection
- Strengthen TB education and awareness among health care providers
- Find, cure, and prevent all forms of TB in the United States and around the world
- Speak up, end stigma, and end TB

Thank you for your commitment to eliminate TB in the United States and around the world. The work you do is vital, and we will continue to make progress globally because of your heroic efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert R. Redfield MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "R" and "M" being particularly prominent.

Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director, CDC