

Tuberculosis (TB), is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It primarily affects the lungs but can also target other parts of the body such as the kidneys, spine, and brain. TB spreads through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, making it a significant global health concern.

Symptoms of TB include persistent cough, chest pain, fatigue, weight loss, and night sweats. Left untreated, TB can lead to severe health complications and even death. Diagnosis typically involves a combination of medical history assessment, physical examination, and various tests such as chest X-rays, sputum tests, and blood tests.

There are marked inequalities in the geographical and socioeconomic distribution of cases. TB is concentrated in large urban areas and the majority of cases occur amongst those born abroad. In addition, there is a strong association between TB and social deprivation (e.g. alcohol and drug misuse, homelessness or imprisonment) and the major health and social impacts for those affected contributes to further increasing health inequalities in already deprived populations. Although the majority of TB cases are curable, drug-resistant strains of TB have emerged, posing additional challenges to effective treatment. Global efforts to combat TB focus on raising awareness, and ensuring access to accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment for all individuals, especially in vulnerable and underserved communities.

Further information on TB can be found on [NI Direct](#)

Enhanced TB surveillance

All forms of active TB are statutorily notifiable so that timely public health action can be taken to prevent the spread, monitor outbreaks, assess the risk and manage incidents of exposure, and recognise trends in the incidence of TB in the population so as to contribute to and improve the control of TB. Statutory notification of TB cases is made through the Health Protection Duty Room. Enhanced data collection is input to the National Tuberculosis Surveillance system (NTBS) which allows for epidemiology in real time.

With TB having been identified as a public health priority, detailed surveillance on case notification, risk factors, co-morbidities and laboratory results is vital to provide meaningful information on the epidemiology of the disease and to be able to implement evidence-based TB control strategies.

NTBS exists to provide detailed information on each person with TB and the epidemiology of their disease in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The information provided through notification and enhanced through linkage to other sources of data is used for epidemiological surveillance to control TB. This aligns with Public Health Agency commitment to reduce the suffering and harm caused by the disease, to reduce inequalities and to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) End TB Strategy milestone of reducing TB incidence by 50% by 2025 and contribute eventually to the elimination of TB as a public health problem.

Publications

Epidemiology of Tuberculosis in Northern Ireland

The official statistics by UKHSA [Tuberculosis \(TB\) notifications reported to enhanced TB surveillance systems: UK, 2000-2022](#) incorporates tuberculosis (TB) data for Northern Ireland (2000-2022). Date of publication: November 2023.

Northern Ireland Annual Surveillance Reports

[N Ireland TB Surveillance Report 2018](#)

[N Ireland TB Surveillance Report 2017](#)

[N Ireland TB Surveillance Report 2016](#)

The archive of epidemiology of tuberculosis in Northern Ireland: annual surveillance reports dating 1992-2015 can be found [here](#)

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