



# Systematic screening for active tuberculosis: *an operational guide*



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**Additional information available online:** <http://who.int/tb/tbscreening/en/>

- Tool to assist with prioritization of risk groups for screening and choice of algorithm
- Systematic screening for active tuberculosis: principles and recommendations
- Checklists for screening in specific risk groups
- Systematic reviews:
  - The benefits to communities and individuals of screening for active tuberculosis disease: a systematic review
  - A systematic review of the sensitivity and specificity of symptom- and chest-radiography screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis in HIV-negative persons and persons with unknown HIV status
  - A systematic review of number needed to screen to detect a case of active tuberculosis in different risk groups
  - Acceptability of TB screening among at-risk and vulnerable groups
  - Acceptability of household and community-based TB screening in high burden communities



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## Definitions

### Active tuberculosis

Active tuberculosis (TB) refers to disease that occurs in someone infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It is characterized by signs or symptoms of active disease, or both, and is distinct from latent TB infection, which occurs without signs or symptoms of active disease.

### Active tuberculosis case-finding

Active case-finding is synonymous with systematic screening for active TB, although it normally implies screening that is implemented outside of health facilities.

### Number needed to screen

The number needed to screen (or NNS) is the number of people that need to undergo screening to diagnose one person with active TB.

### Passive tuberculosis case-finding

This is a patient-initiated pathway to TB diagnosis involving: (1) a person with active TB experiencing symptoms that he or she recognizes as serious; (2) the person having access to and seeking care, and presenting spontaneously at an appropriate health facility; (3) a health worker correctly assessing that the person fulfils the criteria for suspected TB; and (4) the successful use of a diagnostic algorithm with sufficient sensitivity and specificity to diagnose TB. Passive case-finding may involve an element of systematic screening if the identification of people with suspected TB is done systematically for all people seeking care in a health facility or clinic.

### Risk groups

A risk group is any group of people in which the prevalence or incidence of TB is significantly higher than in the general population.

### Screening test, examination or procedure for active tuberculosis

A test, examination or other procedure for active tuberculosis distinguishing people with a high likelihood of having active TB from people who are highly unlikely to have active TB. A screening test is not intended to be diagnostic. People with positive results on a screening test should undergo diagnostic evaluation.

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