



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



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# Contents

	Page
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	1
<b>Definitions</b>	2
<b>Abbreviations</b>	3
<b>Executive summary</b>	4
<b>1. Introduction</b>	5
1.1. Rationale for systematic screening for active TB	5
1.2. Pitfalls of screening	6
1.3. Objectives of the operational guide	6
<b>2. The six steps of the planning and implementation cycle</b>	10
2.1. Assessing the situation	10
2.2. Setting goals and specific objectives	17
2.3. Identification and prioritization of risk groups	18
2.4. Choosing screening and diagnostic algorithms	25
2.5. Planning, budgeting, and implementation	31
2.6. Monitoring, evaluation, and re-programming	35
<b>3. Web-based tool to assist risk group prioritization and algorithm choices</b>	40
3.1. Introduction to the tool	40
3.2. How to use the tool	41
3.3. Limitations of the tool	45
<b>References</b>	46
<b>Annex: Ten potential screening and diagnostic algorithms</b>	48

**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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