

TUBERCULOSIS *and* AIR TRAVEL



GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL

SECOND EDITION



World Health
Organization

Tuberculosis and air travel

Guidelines for prevention and control

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Preface

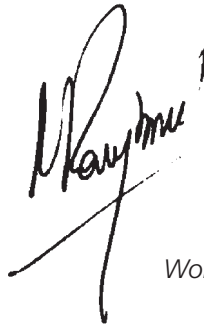
Air travel is now widely accessible, resulting in increasing numbers of international air travellers, with a consequent increased risk of the spread of infectious diseases carried by infected travellers. Transmission of airborne infection between people in confined spaces such as aircraft cabins is of particular concern to health officials and the public at large.

In the early 1990s, there were reports of the transmission during long flights of tuberculosis (TB) infection, including its most dangerous form, multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), from contagious travellers to other passengers and crew. These episodes caused anxiety among travellers and serious concern among public health officials and airline companies. The World Health Organization (WHO) published guidelines in 1998 defining the extent of the problem and the potential risks and providing recommendations for travellers, physicians and health authorities and airline companies. The recommendations were based on the limited experience available at the time: investigations involving seven contagious TB patients and some 2600 potentially exposed air travellers.

Since attention has been drawn to the risk of TB transmission on board aircraft, other airborne diseases have caused major international public health emergencies, in some cases involving the actual or potential of transmission of infection during international flights. In addition, the emergence of MDR-TB in recent years has raised special concerns in relation to the international spread of particularly dangerous strains of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It is therefore increasingly necessary to have clear and effective procedures in place to reduce the risk of transmission of infection on board and to ensure appropriate follow-up when necessary.

The revised International Health Regulations, adopted in 2005, provide a legal framework for a more effective coordinated international response to emergencies caused by outbreaks of infectious diseases. A number of provisions are relevant to the detection and control of TB during air travel, strengthening the authority of WHO and of national public health authorities in this domain.

Because of these important developments since the original guidelines were issued in 1998, WHO has prepared this revised version to take account of current public health risks that may arise during air travel and new approaches to international collaboration in dealing with them. The guidelines were developed with the collaboration of international experts in air travel medicine and other authorities. Implementing the recommendations will help to reduce the spread of dangerous pathogens across the globe and decrease the risk of infection among individual travellers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Raviglione', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending from the bottom of the signature.

Mario Raviglione
Director
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This second edition of *Tuberculosis and air travel: guidelines for prevention and control* was prepared by WHO in collaboration with the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Air Transport Association, international experts in tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, and leading authorities in public health and travel medicine.

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