

Tuberculosis deaths rising again in Europe: WHO

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The number of tuberculosis deaths in Europe is on the rise again after declining for almost two decades, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Friday.

TB killed 27,300 Europeans in 2021 compared to 27,000 a year earlier, according to the latest data available.

WHO attributed the rise to the Covid-19 pandemic, citing lockdowns, diverted [medical resources](#) and delayed diagnoses, as well as the spread of a drug-resistant form of tuberculosis.

This was the first time in 20 years the [downward trend](#) was broken, the WHO Europe said.

Russia and Ukraine were the two most affected [countries](#), with around 4,900 and 3,600 deaths respectively.

Across the 53 countries that make up the WHO's European region, which includes countries in Central Asia, some 230,000 people contracted TB, a number that continued to decline from previous years.

The illness is caused by a bacteria that primarily attacks the lungs.

It is transmitted via the air by infected people, for example by coughing. It is preventable and curable.

"The increase in TB deaths that we are seeing in 2021 is most likely a consequence of delay in, or lack of, TB diagnosis due to disruption to TB services during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased severity of disease and an associated increase in deaths," the WHO Europe said.

In addition, the prevalence of drug-resistant TB also rose in 2021, with one in three cases of the illness resistant to rifampicin, the main drug used to treat the illness.

In October, the WHO expressed concern about the rise in new cases worldwide in 2021, also the first rise in 20 years.

Some 10.6 million people developed tuberculosis in 2021, its data showed.

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