

# **Tuberculosis can have a lasting impact on the lung health of successfully treated individuals**

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New research being presented at this year's [ESCMID Global Congress](#) (formerly ECCMID) in Barcelona, Spain (27–30 April) has found compelling evidence that tuberculosis (TB) can have a lasting impact on the lungs of individuals who have been successfully treated for the

disease.

TB survivors have smaller lungs with narrower airways and slower air flow, the analysis of data on tens of thousands of individuals from around the world found.

"This damage could have a profound effect on long-term health, reduce [quality of life](#) and affect ability to work and carry out day-to-day tasks," says lead researcher Dr. Sharenja Ratnakumar, of St George's, University of London, London, UK.

"And, with growing numbers of people being successfully treated for TB, the finding strongly indicates that post-TB lung disease is an under-recognized global challenge."

TB can be cured with antibiotics and, worldwide, an estimated 155 million people are alive today as a result of successful diagnosis and treatment of the bacterial infection.

However, although significant progress has been made in combating TB in recent decades, the number of new diagnoses has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Some 7.5 million were diagnosed globally in 2022—the highest number since monitoring began in 1995 and above the pre-COVID baseline of 7.1 million in 2019, according to WHO's 2023 Global Tuberculosis Report.

The burden is highest in sub-Saharan Africa and south east Asia but even low incidence countries such as the UK are seeing diagnoses increase. According to provisional data from the UK Health Security Agency, there were 4,850 new diagnoses in England in 2023. This is above pre-COVID levels and represents a rise of more than 10% on 2022, when

there were 4,380 diagnoses.

Previous research has found that between 18% and >80% of survivors will be left with lung damage that reduces their quality of life and life expectancy but data on the size and type of respiratory impairment is scarce. To find out more, Dr. Ratnakumar and colleagues carried out a [systematic review](#) and meta-analysis of existing research on the topic.

The Medline, Embase and CINAHL databases were searched from 1/01/00 to 31/01/23 for studies that compared the lung function of individuals with a history of TB with that of healthy controls.

The [meta-analysis](#) included data on 75,631 individuals from 15 studies conducted in 17 countries with varying TB incidence and income levels.

The 7,377 TB survivors had an average age range of 11–65 years. Many of the studies were skewed towards a younger population (

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