



In this Issue

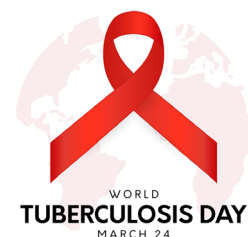
World Hearing Day
– 3 March 2025

World Kidney Day
– 13 March



World Head Injury Awareness Day
– 22 March

World TB Day
– 24 March



Make Ear and Hearing Care a Reality World Hearing Day – 3 March 2025

World Hearing Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about hearing health and foster inclusivity for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Why Hearing Health Matters

By 2030, over 500 million people are expected to have disabling hearing loss requiring rehabilitation.

- Over one billion young people risk permanent hearing loss due to prolonged exposure to loud sounds from recreational activities.
- Many cases of hearing loss can be prevented through safe listening and good hearing care practices.
- Early identification and access to timely rehabilitation are essential for individuals with hearing loss to reach their full potential.
- 1 in 2 young people are at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening
- You can take steps today to ensure good hearing health throughout life.

Being Deaf or Hard of Hearing Friendly

Fostering inclusivity ensures that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can fully participate in society. Nearly 20% of people experience some degree of hearing loss, and this number is growing. Adopting effective communication strategies helps us connect better with everyone.

Communication Tips:

- **Face the person** to allow for lip-reading and facial expression recognition.
- **Use body language and gestures** to support verbal communication.
- **Speak clearly and at a moderate pace**—shouting can distort speech and make lip-reading harder.

- **Use visual cues** from the environment to aid understanding.
- **Maintain natural lip movements** for easier lip-reading.
- **Utilise available materials**—write on paper, type on a phone, or point to illustrations.
- **Speak one at a time** to avoid overlapping conversations that cause confusion.
- **Take advantage of technology**, such as voice-to-text apps and remote sign language interpretation.
- **Reduce background noise** to make conversations clearer.
- **Learn basic sign language and fingerspelling** for better interaction.
- **Include everyone in conversations**—avoid saying, "I'll tell you later," which isolates those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Building an Inclusive Society

Society can take steps to include people who are deaf or hard of hearing by ensuring accessible communication, such as captions, written information and professional sign language interpreters. Facilitating the use of assistive devices such as hearing aids, FM systems and hearing loops also helps. It is important to engage with deaf and hard-of-hearing communities regarding their needs and best practices, and it is equally important to promote awareness campaigns on hearing loss prevention and solutions.

By empowering ourselves with knowledge and taking action, we can create a more inclusive world where hearing health is a priority for all. For more information, please visit: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-hearing-day/2025>



Are Your Kidneys, OK?

World Kidney Day – 13 March 2025

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a global health crisis, affecting an estimated 850 million people worldwide. If left undiagnosed and untreated, CKD can progress to kidney failure, leading to severe complications and premature death. By 2040, CKD is projected to become the 5th leading cause of years of life lost. This alarming trend highlights the urgent need for early detection and preventive measures.

Who is at Risk?

Certain populations are at a higher risk for kidney disease and should undergo regular testing. Major risk factors include:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Family history of kidney disease

Other risk factors include:

- Acute kidney injury
- Pregnancy-related kidney disease

- Autoimmune diseases (e.g., lupus, vasculitis)
- Low birth weight or premature birth
- Urinary tract blockages
- Frequent kidney stones
- Birth defects affecting the kidneys or urinary tract

In lower-income countries, additional risks include:

- Heat stress in farm workers
- Snake bites
- Environmental toxins
- Traditional medicines
- Infections such as hepatitis B or C, HIV and parasitic diseases

Simple Tests for Early Detection

For those at high risk, early detection is key. Simple, non-invasive, and cost-effective tests include:

- Blood pressure measurements to check for hypertension
- Body Mass Index (BMI) calculation to assess obesity

- Urine tests to check for albumin (urinary Albumin-Creatinine Ratio or uACR)
- Blood tests:
 - o Glycosylated haemoglobin or fasting/random glucose to check for diabetes
 - o Serum creatinine (preferably combined with cystatin C) to estimate kidney function (eGFR)

Why Early Detection Matters

Early detection and intervention can significantly reduce healthcare costs and improve quality of life. On this World Kidney Day, ask yourself: Are your kidneys, OK? If you're at risk, speak to your healthcare provider about getting tested and prioritise kidney health for a healthier future.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.worldkidneyday.org/>

Did you Bump Your Head?

World Head Injury Awareness Day – 22 March 2025

Every year, World Head Injury Awareness Day serves as a crucial reminder of the importance of protecting our heads and brains from harm. From a mild bump to severe brain trauma, head injuries can have a significant impact on one's quality of life. The goal of this day is to educate people on prevention methods, highlight the risks and encourage the use of protective measures such as helmets and seat belts.

The Alarming Reality

An estimated 89,000 new traumatic brain injuries are reported annually in South Africa¹. While some cases result in minor concussions, others can lead to long-term cognitive impairments, paralysis or even death. Raising awareness about head injuries helps individuals recognise the risks and take preventative action to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Common Causes of Head Injuries

Head injuries can happen in an instant, often as a result of:

- **Motor vehicle, bicycle or pedestrian accidents** – High-speed collisions or abrupt impacts can cause severe trauma to the skull and brain.
- **Falls** – Slips, trips and falls are among the leading causes of head injuries, particularly in children and older adults.
- **Violence** – Physical assaults and violent incidents can lead to traumatic brain injuries with lasting effects.

Any impact on the head can potentially cause significant damage. It's important to remember that the skull doesn't have to be fractured for brain damage to occur.

The Importance of Prevention

Simple precautions can make all the difference in reducing the risk of head injuries:

- **Wear a seat belt** every time you drive or ride in a vehicle.
- **Use an appropriate child safety seat** to protect young passengers.
- **Avoid driving under the influence** of alcohol or drugs.
- **Wear a helmet** when riding a bicycle, motorcycle, or scooter.
- **Utilise stairway railings** and ensure staircases are well-lit to prevent falls.
- **Keep pathways clear** of obstacles to minimise trip hazards.
- **Provide the correct safety equipment** for workers in hazardous environments.

A Moment of Mindfulness Can Save a Lifetime

Many head injuries can be avoided with just a little extra care and attention. Taking simple precautions, such as fastening a helmet before riding or securing a seat belt before driving, can mean the difference between safety and severe injury.

On World Head Injury Awareness Day, let's commit to being mindful of our surroundings and safety measures. By doing so, we can protect ourselves and others from the lifelong consequences of head injuries. Stay safe, stay aware and always protect your brain—it's the control centre of everything you do.

To find out more, please visit: https://www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury/data-research/facts-stats/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/get_the_facts.html

¹<https://www.lifehealthcare.co.za/news-and-info-hub/latest-news/traumatic-brain-injury-know-the-facts/>





Understanding Tuberculosis

World TB Day – 24 March 2025

World TB Day raises awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB). The date commemorates Dr. Robert Koch's 1882 discovery of the bacterium that causes TB, a breakthrough that paved the way for diagnosing and treating this disease.

The Global Impact of TB

Tuberculosis remains the world's deadliest infectious disease. In **2023 alone, 10.8 million people fell ill** with TB, and 1.25 million lives were lost to the disease. However, thanks to global efforts, **79 million lives** have been saved since 2000. Despite these strides, TB continues to affect millions², especially in overcrowded environments and among those with weakened immune systems, such as people living with HIV/AIDS.

The theme for World TB Day 2025, **"Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver,"** is a bold call for urgency, hope and accountability. Ending TB is not just a public health issue—it is also a development challenge that demands global cooperation. The End TB Strategy, adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2014, outlines ambitious goals: reducing TB incidence by 80%, TB deaths by 90% and eliminating catastrophic costs for TB-affected households by 2030. However, success depends on country-specific adaptations and sustained commitment.

What is Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious infectious disease primarily affecting the lungs. It spreads through airborne droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. Certain factors increase the risk of contracting TB, including:

- Crowded living conditions
- Weak immune systems (e.g., individuals with HIV/AIDS)
- Malnutrition or chronic illnesses

Although antibiotics can treat TB, some forms of the bacteria have developed resistance, making treatment more challenging.

Symptoms of Tuberculosis

TB infections progress in three stages, each with distinct symptoms:

1. Primary TB Infection:

- o The immune system initially fights the infection, but some bacteria may survive.

- o Most people do not experience symptoms.
- o Some may develop mild flu-like symptoms, such as:
 - ☐ Low fever
 - ☐ Fatigue
 - ☐ Cough

2. Latent TB Infection:

- o The bacteria remain in the body but do not cause illness.
- o There are no symptoms during this stage.
- o People with latent TB do not spread the disease but may develop active TB later.

3. Active TB Disease:

- o The immune system fails to contain the infection, allowing the bacteria to spread.
- o Symptoms may develop gradually and worsen over weeks, including:
 - ☐ Persistent cough (sometimes with blood or mucus)
 - ☐ Chest pain
 - ☐ Fever, chills and night sweats
 - ☐ Weight loss and loss of appetite
 - ☐ Fatigue and general discomfort

TB symptoms can resemble many other illnesses. It is important to consult a doctor if any of these symptoms persist despite rest and basic treatment.

The fight against TB requires commitment, investment and action. Governments, healthcare systems and individuals must work together to achieve the End TB Strategy's ambitious goals. By raising awareness, improving access to healthcare and investing in research, we can move closer to ending TB once and for all.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tuberculosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351250>

²<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-tb-day/2025>

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