

FAQs

What causes leprosy? Leprosy is caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium leprae* (*M. leprae*). It was first seen under the microscope by a Norwegian doctor, Gerhard Armauer Hansen. That's why it is sometimes called Hansen's Disease.

How is it transmitted? *M. leprae* is spread via droplets when an untreated person with leprosy coughs or sneezes. However, the transmission stops within a month after the start of treatment.

Do fingers and toes of persons with leprosy fall off? No. *M. leprae* attacks nerves and destroys the ability to feel pain. Without pain to warn them, persons with leprosy may injure themselves. Repeated injuries lead to the dreadful deformities and disabilities.

I met a man with leprosy on the street. Will I get infected? No. It is not easy to get leprosy. About 95% of the world's population has a natural immunity against the disease. For those who do not have this immunity, they must be exposed to the germ for long periods of time before they can be infected.

Is leprosy hereditary? Leprosy is not hereditary. It is the susceptibility to the disease (the inability to fight the leprosy germs) that is passed on to children. In families where a parent has or had leprosy, it is likely that one or more of the children are susceptible. If the parent does not seek treatment, the susceptible children may get infected.

Is leprosy curable? Yes, with Multidrug Therapy (MDT). MDT is available **FREE** in health centers all over the country.

**Healthy skin,
healthy communities.**

Advocacy Kit
for Local
Government
Executives

LEPROSY



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Sakit sa balat 'wag balewalain,
sa health center magpatingin.

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What is Leprosy?

- Leprosy is an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- It mainly affects skin and peripheral nerves.
- Leprosy bacteria multiply very slowly; full-blown leprosy may develop 3-5 years after being infected.
- The average incubation period is 3-5 years or even longer.
- Leprosy commonly affects young adults.
- The germ is transmitted by prolonged close contact through respiratory tract from an infected person who is not on treatment.
- Leprosy is classified as:
 - Paucibacillary (PB)- up to 5 patches
 - Multibacillary (MB)- more than 5 patches

Leprosy can be cured!

Multidrug Therapy (MDT) is the standard treatment for leprosy.

Multibacillary (MB) patients are treated for 12 months; Paucibacillary (PB) patients are treated for 6 months.

MDT in blister packs is available free of charge in all government health facilities.

Patients are no longer infectious after the first dose of MDT.

The medicine is effective to kill most of the leprosy bacilli during the first months of treatment.



Leprosy patches can be pale or reddish or copper-coloured;

Do not itch; Usually do not hurt;

Other signs of leprosy include: Reddish or skin-coloured nodules or smooth, shiny diffuse thickening of the skin without a loss of sensation.



Can be flat or raised;

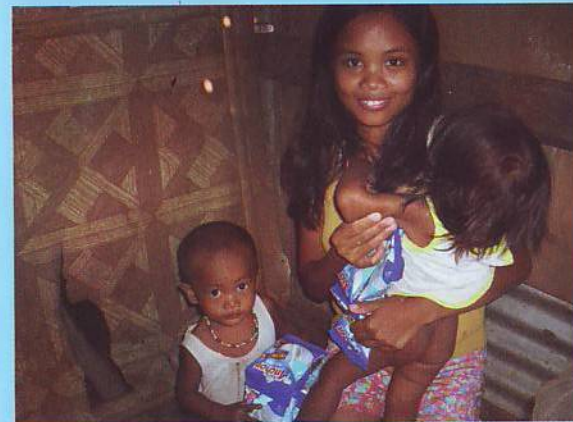
Skin is dry and without hair.



Can appear anywhere.

Lack sensation to heat, touch or pain;

Partners in Leprosy Action



- Partnership between schools, Rural Health Units (RHUs) and private sector

Schools

- Students campaign for skin health and look for household members with skin problems
- Teachers collect list of household members with skin problems and submit the report to the RHUs

Rural Health Units

- Persons found to have skin problems are advised to seek consultation at the RHUs
- Skin consultations may also be done at pre-arranged outreach and clinic days
- Volunteer health workers do the same among households without students

STRATEGIES FOR LEPROSY ELIMINATION

- Accessibility to leprosy control services
- Simplified logistics to ensure availability of MDT at all health facilities
- Information, Education, Communication and Advocacy activities
- Voluntary reporting of persons with skin patches

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVES

- Provide resources for leprosy control program
- Ensure availability of leprosy services
- Help create a positive image for leprosy elimination

