

LEPROSY

Leprosy is a chronic, mildly communicable disease that mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, the eyes, and mucosa of the upper respiratory tract.

Cause

Mycobacterium leprae bacillus

Mode of Transmission

Transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases

Signs and Symptoms

3 Cardinal Signs of Leprosy

1. Skin patch with loss of sensation

The skin lesion can be single or multiple, usually less pigmented than the surrounding normal skin. Sometimes the lesion is reddish or copper-colored.

2. Enlarged peripheral nerve

A thickened nerve is often accompanied by other signs as a result of damage to the nerve. These may be loss of sensation in the skin and weakness of muscles supplied by the affected nerve.

3. Positive slit-skin smear

In a small proportion of cases, rod-shaped, red-stained leprosy bacilli, which are diagnostic of the disease, may be seen in the smears taken from the affected skin when examined under a microscope after appropriate staining.



Treatment

Multidrug therapy (MDT) treatment

- Combination of rifampicin, clofazimine, and dapsone for Multibacillary (MB) leprosy patients
- Rifampicin and dapsone for Paucibacillary (PB) leprosy patients

Treatment of leprosy with only one antileprosy drug will always result in development of drug resistance to that drug.

Prevention and Control

- Treat all leprosy cases to prevent spread of infection.
- Avoid direct contact with untreated patients (especially young children).
- Practice personal hygiene.
- Maintain body resistance by healthful living.
- Practice good nutrition.
- Have enough rest and exercise.
- Keep environment clean.