

Hansen's Disease (Leprosy)

Fact Sheet



Hansen's disease (also known as leprosy) is an infection caused by slow-growing bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*. It can affect the nerves, skin, eyes, and lining of the nose.



Hansen's disease likely spreads from person to person by droplets from the mouth or nose. It takes **prolonged, close contact with someone with untreated Hansen's Disease over many months** to catch the disease.

Signs and Symptoms



Skin Color Changes



Skin Lesions / Growths



Sensory Loss



Muscle weakness

Symptoms mainly affect the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes (the soft, moist areas just inside the body's openings). If left untreated, people with Hansen's disease can develop serious nerve damage.



Talk to a healthcare provider if you think you have Hansen's Disease. They may take a biopsy and look for the bacteria under a microscope to confirm diagnosis. They may also do tests to rule out other skin diseases.

Treatment

- A healthcare provider will use multiple antibiotics to treat Hansen's disease. This prevents the risk of antibiotic resistance.
- Treatment usually lasts between one to two years. The illness can be cured if treatment is completed as prescribed.
- Treatment does not reverse nerve damage, so it is important that the disease be diagnosed as early as possible to prevent damage.



For More Information:



Contact a healthcare provider or Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 for more information.

You can also visit www.cdc.gov/leprosy.