



HANSEN'S DISEASE (LEPROSY)

WHAT IS LEPROSY (HANSEN'S DISEASE)?

LEPROSY IS A BACTERIAL DISEASE OF THE SKIN AND NERVES IN THE HANDS AND FEET AND, IN SOME CASES, THE LINING OF THE NOSE. LEPROSY IS A RARE DISEASE IN THE UNITED STATES.

WHO GETS LEPROSY?

ANYONE CAN GET LEPROSY, BUT CHILDREN SEEM TO BE MORE LIKELY TO BE INFECTED.

HOW IS LEPROSY SPREAD?

IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THE LEPROSY GERM IS SPREAD, BUT PROBABLY THROUGH CLOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY ILL. THE GERM PROBABLY ENTERS THE BODY THROUGH THE NOSE AND POSSIBLY THROUGH BROKEN SKIN. THE GERMS GET IN THE AIR THROUGH NASAL DISCHARGE OF UNTREATED PATIENTS.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF LEPROSY?

THE SYMPTOMS OF TUBERCULOID LEPROSY ARE NUMB SKIN LESIONS. LEPROMATOUS LEPROSY SYMPTOMS ARE A STUFFY NOSE AND MANY SKIN LESIONS AND NODULES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BODY.

HOW SOON AFTER EXPOSURE DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

IT USUALLY TAKES ABOUT FOUR YEARS FOR TUBERCULOID LEPROSY SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR AND ABOUT EIGHT YEARS FOR LEPROMATOUS LEPROSY SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR LEPROSY?

TAKING MULTIPLE MEDICATIONS FOR SIX MONTHS TO TWO YEARS TREATS THE DISEASE. A DOCTOR WHO HAS EXPERIENCE WITH THE DISEASE SHOULD TREAT PATIENTS WITH LEPROSY.

WHEN AND FOR HOW LONG IS A PERSON ABLE TO SPREAD LEPROSY?

IN MOST CASES, A PERSON WILL NOT INFECT OTHERS AFTER ABOUT THREE MONTHS OF STARTING TREATMENT.

HOW CAN LEPROSY BE PREVENTED?

THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF LEPROSY IS THE EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE INFECTED.