



# WORLD LEPROSY DAY 2021

## "BEAT LEPROSY"



About 2000 new Leprosy patients reported every year. Around 5 - 10% of patients present with visible deformities at the time of diagnosis in Sri Lanka. Reasons for high percentage of deformity is late detection. Late detection is due to lack of awareness among public and the stigma.

Around 10% of new cases are children less than 15 years indicating active transmission of disease from undiagnosed individuals. This disease is easily diagnosable, treatable and curable. While on treatment patients should not be isolated as they do not spread the disease. They can live their normal life styles. Disease shows a good prognosis when detected early, treated promptly and managed correctly and can be cured without any deformity.

Treatment is available free of charge in all government skin clinics. Consultant Dermatologists are available island wide. Ministry of Health has taken steps to improve dermatological services.



Contact tracing and Defaulter tracing is improved using MOH and Public Health inspectors in the country.

**Hon. (Mrs.) Pavithra Wanniarachchi**  
Minister of Health

Leprosy is one of a historical disease among the other communicable diseases. Mycobacterium leprae has been identified more than hundred years ago. Leprosy pathogen is spread from the infected persons. It can be spread to any person at any age. It can damage the skin and the peripheral nerve system of the body. Therefore parents and adults should be more responsible on protecting the children from Leprosy.

At present leprosy is known to be an abandoned tropicalized disease in the world. Specially there is a high risk of spreading leprosy among children with low-income families. There are many risk factors causing leprosy. Malnutrition, living in overcrowded houses, difficulties in looking after the children, are some of the risk factors. Patients with high bacterial density are more prone to spread the disease. And the disease could be spread to healthy people who have close & long-term contact with these leprosy patients. The incubation period of Leprosy is long and sometimes it will take about 5 years to become symptomatic. It is very



**Dr. S.H. Munasinghe**  
Secretary  
Ministry of Health

important to be aware of symptoms of Leprosy in order to identify the disease at earliest stage.

We can reach soon to the goal "Leprosy free Sri Lanka" by taking proper treatment from skin clinics which are located in each district within the country.

Message from the Director General of Health Services  
Leprosy is a disease which effects the skin and the peripheral nervous system. It can cause variety of symptoms. Deformities occur due to the damages of the nervous system. Clinical features are seen in a certain range of Leprosy. One patch on the skin can be seen in some patients while in others skin patches spread all over the body.

According to the clinical features three types identified.  
1. **Intermediary Leprosy** - Light colour skin patch is the characteristic feature.  
2. **Tuberculoid Leprosy** - Numbness or a light colour skin patch in any part of the skin is the feature. Thickening of some nerves associated the patches may be seen.  
3. **Lepromatous Leprosy** There are no reactions found by the affected patient's immune system. Therefore bacteria multiplies all over the body. So the bacteria could be spread all over the body in large number.



**Dr. Asela Gunawardena**  
Director General of Health Services  
Ministry of Health

Anti - Leprosy Campaign is conducting many activities island wide each year to eliminate leprosy from Sri Lanka.

## REDUCE STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

### How is leprosy transmitted?

Leprosy is transmitted from the bacteria released from an infected person during coughing and sneezing to another person

### What are the symptoms of leprosy?

Skin patches and numbness of the hands and feet

**BE CAUTIOUS**



Pale skin patches



Thickened nerves



Skin nodules



Claw hand

**IF ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS ARE IDENTIFIED, VISIT THE NEAREST DERMATOLOGY CLINIC IN A GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL**

### Is Leprosy curable?

Yes, leprosy can be completely cured if Multi-Drug Treatment (MDT) is started early

**LATE DETECTION OR TREATMENT REFUSAL CAN LEAD TO DISABILITIES SUCH AS NON-HEALING ULCERS IN THE HANDS AND FEET AND BLINDNESS**

**DO NOT BE AFRAID OR HIDE FROM LEPROSY**

### Current situation

Approximately 2000 new cases are detected every year in Sri Lanka. Nearly half of these patients are reported from Colombo, Kalutara and Gampaha districts. Batticaloa district reports the second highest number of patients. It is alarming to note that about 200 new cases detected are in children below the age of 15 years.

Seeking treatment for leprosy is delayed as a result of lack of awareness. Therefore, people seek medical care with complications of leprosy such as numbness of hands and feet and nerve paralysis. Early detection of symptoms and seeking medical care early would prevent such occurrences.

Programmes for awareness, detection, treatment and rehabilitation are conducted by the Regional Epidemiologists and Public Health Inspectors for Leprosy in the districts with the support of NGOs under the guidance of the Anti Leprosy Campaign, Ministry of Health.

For more details contact the Anti Leprosy Campaign. (Telephone No. 011-2958658 )

**Let us all work together to eliminate leprosy from Sri Lanka by 2030**



**Dr. Champa J. Aluthweera**  
Director  
Anti Leprosy Campaign



**Dr. Kapila Piyasena**  
Consultant Community Physician  
Anti Leprosy Campaign



**Dr. Nayani Suriyarachchi**  
Country Coordinator – Sri Lanka  
FAIRMED FOUNDATION

**So, let's all get together, and fight to beat leprosy once and for all.**

I am a small-scale businessman from Ambalantota and I was diagnosed with leprosy a few years ago. I was treated at a government hospital and was provided with proper advice and free MDT treatment whilst maintaining confidentiality.

I am now fully recovered and with my personal experience, I can confidently state that a person on MDT treatment cannot infect another person. I was able to live a normal life and as a responsible adult ensured that my family was screened too.

Do not be afraid of leprosy and seek treatment during early onset of symptoms to prevent development of disabilities.



**R.G. Sujith Dhammika**

**Visit the closest government hospital if skin patches with loss of sensation are detected. Do not get scared. Leprosy is curable.**

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