



until  
No Leprosy Remains

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON LEPROA REACTIONS

**(For Persons Affected by Leprosy and their  
Caregivers, Family members, Change  
Agents, Peer Supporters, Neighbors etc.)**

### NLR INDIA

C-4/1 39, First Floor,  
Safdarjung Development Area  
New Delhi 110016  
+91-11-26611215/16  
info@nlrindia.org



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- Leprosy is caused by a bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- The bacteria primarily affect skin and nerves.
- Leprosy can cause disability if not treated early and completely



#### • Lepra reactions:

- It is the body's immune response towards leprosy bacteria.
- This can occur before, during and after completion of the treatment.
- The existing signs and symptoms increase; new signs and symptoms may also occur.
- The common signs/ symptoms of lepra reaction are:
  - Redness, swelling & pain in existing skin patches and affected nerves which may lead to
    - a. Numbness, tingling and loss of sensation in the hands or feet
    - b. Weakness of muscles in the hands or feet
    - c. Inability to close the eyes properly
  - Sudden appearance of painful nodular swellings
  - Weakness and paralysis of muscles of limbs
  - Nerve tenderness and pain
  - Infrequent blinking of eye, incomplete closure of eye lids and painful red eye
  - Pain in testes
  - Enlarged lymph glands and painful swollen red joints
  - Fever, body ache
  - Fatigue, tiredness, not feeling well



- Lepra reaction can occur during treatment of leprosy. The treatment needs to be continued even during lepra reaction.
- Important reasons for the occurrence of lepra reactions:
  - High bacterial load
  - Not adhering to the treatment
  - Existing disability
  - Stress, anxiety, emotional imbalances, pregnancy, after delivery, puberty
  - Other infections (worm, dental, urinary tract, etc.).
- Lepra reaction is an emergency, treatment is available; it needs to be identified and managed quickly; otherwise, it can lead to nerve damage causing muscle paralysis, disability, and deformity.
- On suspicion of lepra reaction, the patient needs to be immediately referred to a doctor.
- All leprosy affected persons, and their caregivers should know about signs and symptoms of lepra reactions. They should keep phone number of local health worker/ health facility.
- To take care of swelling of joints and inflammation of nerve, the inflamed part of the body needs to be rested. It should be kept in a comfortable position and should not be massaged.