



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.)



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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.

