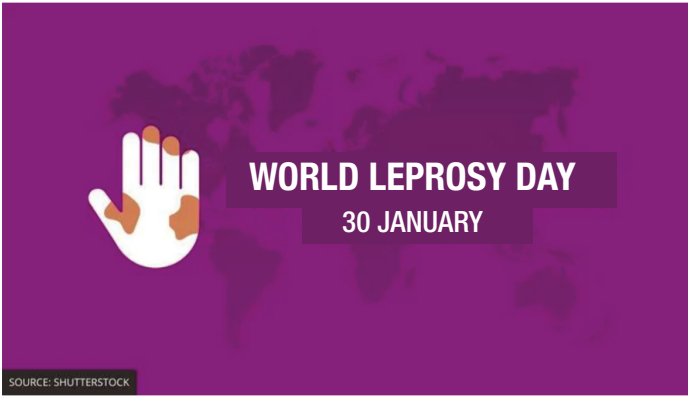


World Leprosy Day



Each year on the last Sunday of January we observe World Leprosy Day, (which is also known as Hansen's Disease Day). The day was founded in 1954 by French philanthropist Raoul Follereau. It aims to raise awareness about Hansen's Disease (Leprosy) and educate people about the disease. Hansen's Disease that is easily treatable today.

The theme for World Leprosy Day in 2022 is "United for Dignity". It honours people who have suffered from leprosy by sharing their stories, advocating for mental wellbeing, and celebrating the human right to live a healthy, dignified life free from disease.

The burden of Hansen's Disease

- According to CDC statistics, these results were obtained:
- The number of new cases reported globally to (WHO) in 2019 was more than 200,000.
 - Close to 15,000 children were diagnosed with Hansen's Disease in 2019, more than 40 a day.
 - An estimated 2 to 3 million people are living with Hansen's Disease-related disabilities globally.
 - In 2019, the countries with the highest number of new diagnoses were India, Brazil, and Indonesia.
 - Over half of all new cases of Hansen's disease are diagnosed in India, which remains home to a third of the world's poor, a group disproportionately affected by the disease.



What is Hansen's Disease?

Hansen's disease is an infection caused by a bacterium called **Mycobacterium leprae**. These bacteria grow very slowly, and it may take up to 20 years to develop signs of the infection.

Sign and Symptoms

Symptoms mainly affect the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes (the soft, moist areas just inside the body's openings).

The disease can cause skin symptoms such as:

- A large, discoloured lesion on the chest.
- Discoloured patches of skin (lighter than the skin around).
- Growths (nodules) on the skin.
- Thick, stiff or dry skin.
- Painless ulcers on the soles of feet.
- Painless swelling or lumps on the face or earlobes.
- Loss of eyebrows or eyelashes.

Symptoms caused by damage to the nerves are:

- Numbness of affected areas of the skin.
- Muscle weakness or paralysis (especially in the hands and feet).
- Enlarged nerves (especially those around the elbow and knee and in the sides of the neck).
- Eye problems that may lead to blindness (when facial nerves are affected).

Symptoms caused by the disease in the mucous membranes are:

- A stuffy nose
- Nosebleeds



Important to know:

- Hansen's disease can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and a healthy person breathes in the droplets containing the bacteria.
- Prolonged, close contact with someone with untreated leprosy over many months is needed to catch the disease.
- Hansen's disease is treated with a combination of antibiotics.
- Treatment usually lasts between one to two years.
- The illness can be cured if treatment is completed as prescribed.