

Name of the resource person: Dr. Roobhini Sri N S K **Podcast title:** Leprosy- Myths & Facts

Department: Microbiology

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Transcript

Hello everyone this is Dr. Roobhini Sri, Assistant professor, Department of Microbiology. I would like to explain few myths and facts about leprosy via this podcast. Leprosy or Hansen disease is a chronic infectious disease which is caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. The disease affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and the eyes. Leprosy is curable and treatment in the early stages can prevent disability. Apart from the physical deformity, persons affected by leprosy face stigmatization and discrimination.

Myths and facts about leprosy

Leprosy is a curse, the result of sin, or punishment from God

Leprosy is a bacterial infection transmitted from the environment or an individual. It does not discriminate based on race, gender, class, age, or religion. It has nothing to do with curses or sin.

Only poor people get leprosy

Leprosy affects individuals with weakened immune systems. The disease often spreads in poorer areas due to poor sanitation and nutrition, but it all depends on a person's predisposition and the state of their immune system. It can affect the wealthy as well as the poor.

You shouldn't touch anyone with leprosy because it's highly contagious

Leprosy is only a mildly infectious disease that 95 percent of the world's population is already immune to. Leprosy is not easily transmitted and those affected by it are not "untouchable". Once a person has received Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT) for 72 hours, they are no longer infectious.

Leprosy makes bits of your body fall off

The disease itself does not cause parts of the body to fall off; however, severe inflammatory reactions caused by untreated cuts can lead to amputation.

Do people who have leprosy need to live in special houses isolated from healthy people?

People with leprosy who are being treated with antibiotics can live a normal life among their family and friends and can continue to attend work or school.

All the white patches are leprosy

Not all the white patches are Leprosy. There are a list of differential diagnosis for a hypopigmented patch such as vitiligo, fungal infection, polymorphous light eruptions and so on. Hence it is necessary to seek medical attention in all cases to arrive at the right diagnosis.

World Leprosy Day is observed every year on the last Sunday of January. In India, it is observed on 30 January every year, coinciding with the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who was a big crusader against leprosy.



The aim of observing the World Leprosy Day is to create awareness against the stigma attached to the disease, by making the general community aware that it is a disease spread by a bacteria and it can be easily cured. World Leprosy Day is an opportunity to support the lives of those affected, raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of the disease, and tackle the stigma that too often surrounds leprosy.

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