

I can do it myself!

Tips for people affected by leprosy
who want to prevent disability



**World Health
Organization**

Regional Office for South-East Asia

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New Delhi

People with leprosy who take medicines given to them at a health centre regularly have less chance of disability. Take your medicine every day, even if your patches look better.

If you notice any of the following, you must go and tell the health worker immediately:

- If patches become red, painful and swollen.
- If you have fever and / or pain in your arms or legs.
- If small painful red bumps appear on your skin.
- If your eyes become red and painful.
- If you notice that things feel different when you hold them, or that your hands or feet are feeling weak.

Medicines for leprosy can cure the disease completely.

You have the **power to prevent disability.
The tips given in this book are to remind you how to do it.**

Is it difficult for you to close your eyes properly?
Do you often have red eyes?

If “yes” to one or both:

You need to take care of your eyes to prevent damage; the next few pages will help you learn how to take care of your eyes.

Keep your eyes in good condition

Dust, sunlight and dryness can damage eyes. Close your eyes often to protect them. Make it a regular habit.

During the day:

- Wear glasses or a hat. Ladies can wear a shawl or scarf that can be pulled over the face.
- Be careful of flies; chase them away with a fan or fly whisk.

At night:

- Sleep under a net or blanket, or tie a cloth loosely over your eyes, to keep out dust and insects.

If your eyes are itchy, do **NOT** rub them. Pull your eye closed by stretching the skin at the side of your eyes. Use eye drops.

Clean around your eyes and check them in a mirror every morning and evening. If you cannot check them yourself, ask a friend to check them for you. If your eyes are red you should see a health worker or a doctor.

EYES

DANGER

- Dust
- Dryness

ACTION

- Tightly close eyes often



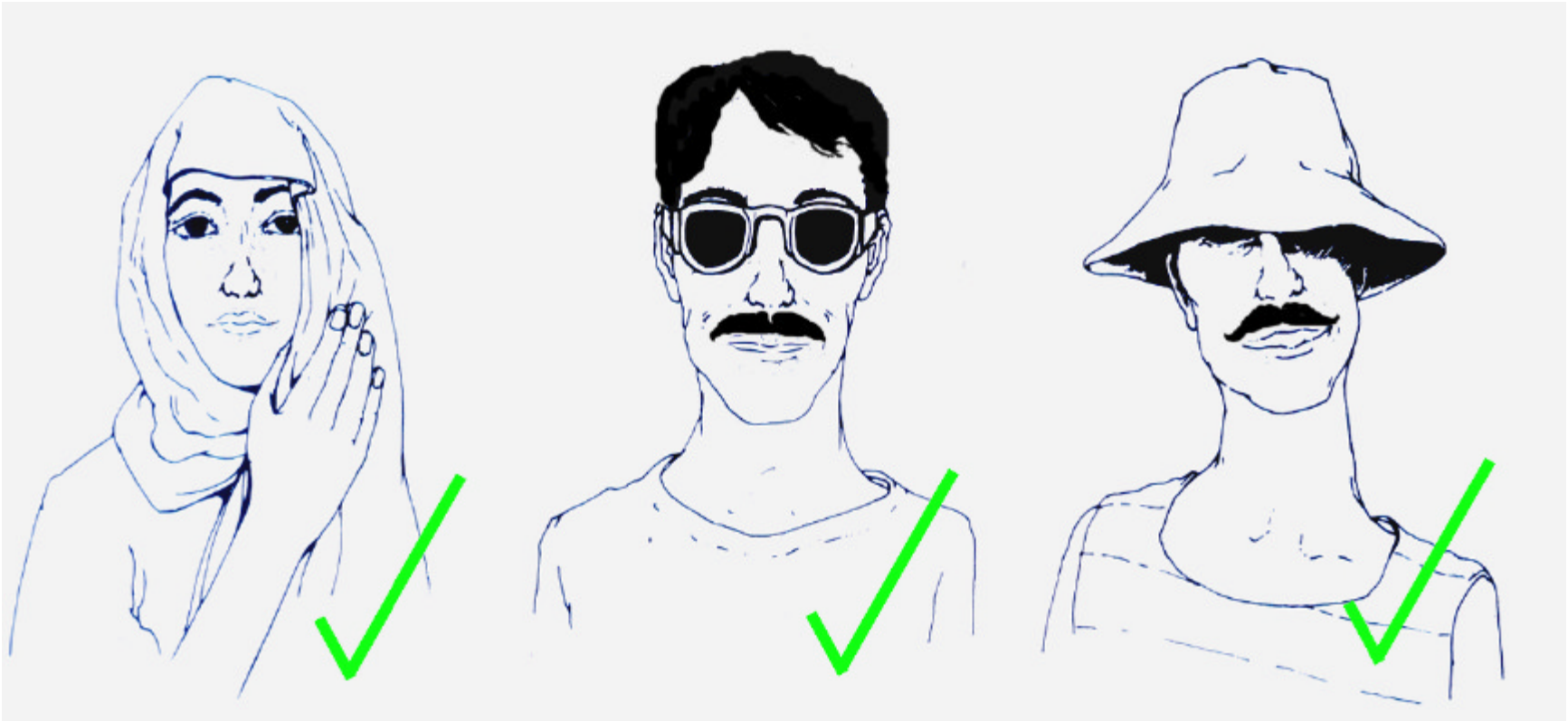
EYES

DANGER

- Dust
- Dryness

ACTION

- Shawl or scarf to cover
- Wear glasses
- Wear hat



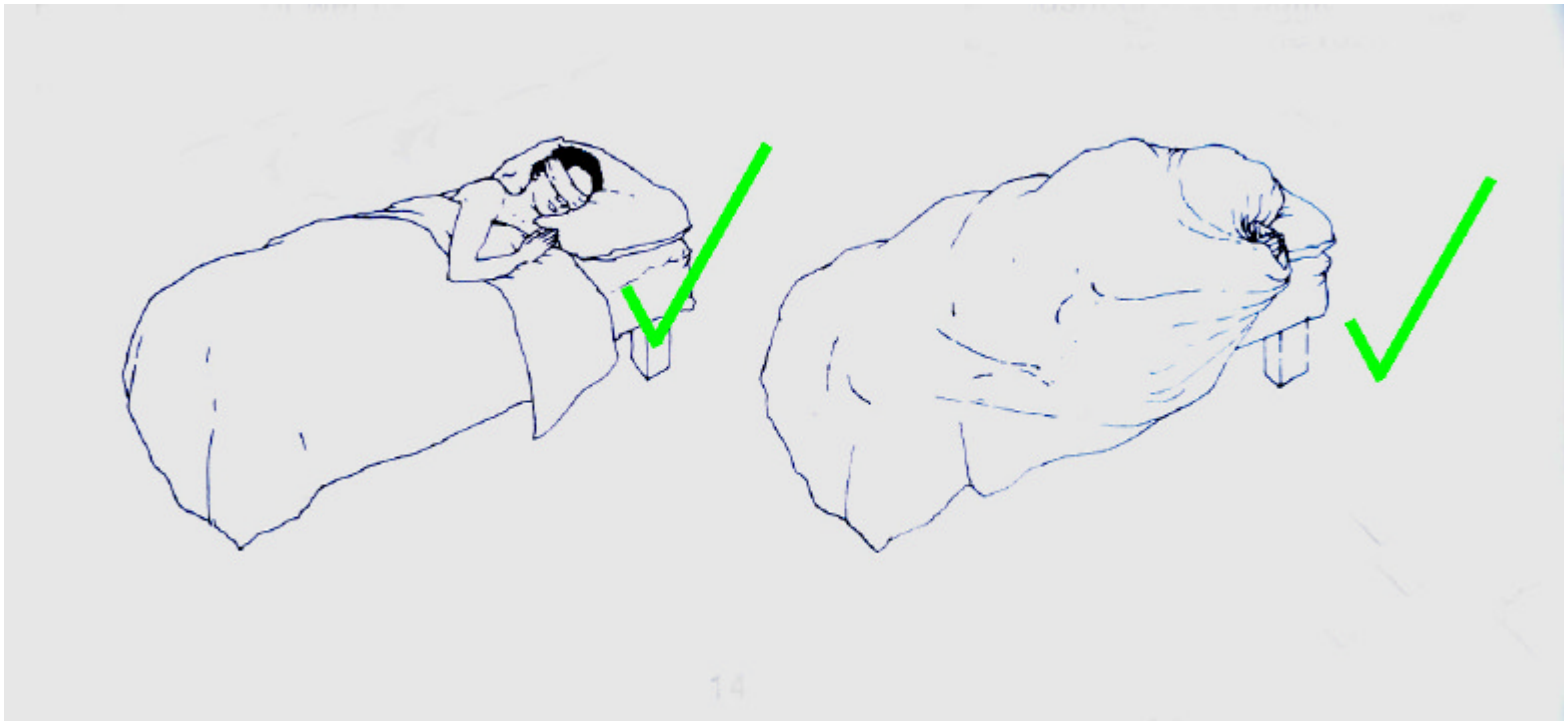
EYES

DANGER

- Night-time insects
- Dirt
- Dust

ACTION

- Blanket
- Cloth cover
- Mosquito net



EYES

DANGER

Rubbing

- Red eyes
- Sore eyes

ACTION

- Pull eyelid to close eye



EYES

DANGER

- Redness

ACTION

- Check in mirror
- Friends to check
- See a health worker or a doctor



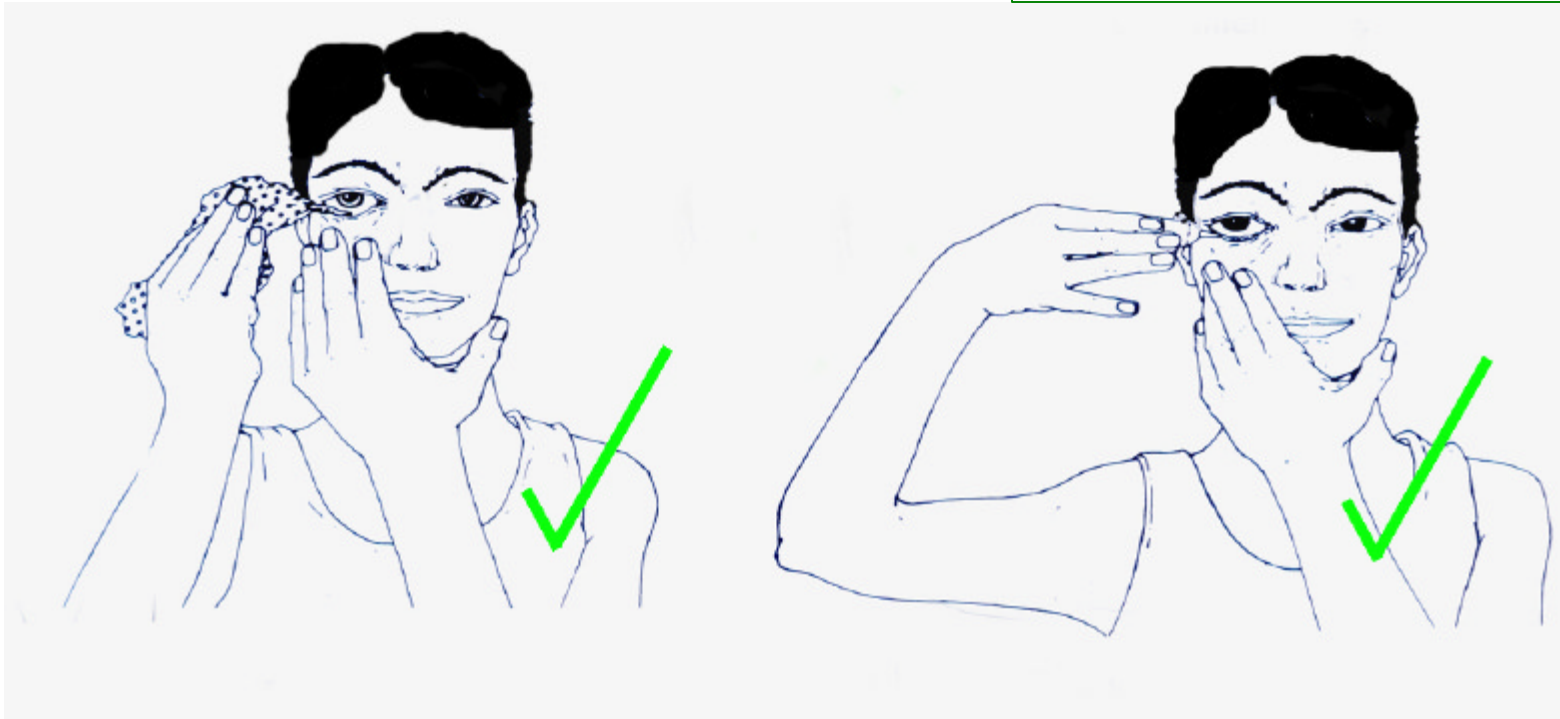
EYES

DANGER

- Dirt

ACTION

- Clear away dirt with clean cloth
- Eye drops



Do you have loss of feeling in your hands?
Do you often have wounds on your hands?

If “yes” to one or both:

You need to take care of your hands to keep them healthy and prevent more damage; the next few pages show you how to care for your hands.

Keep your hands in good condition

The skin on your hands can become dry and cracked:

- Every morning and evening, soak your hands in water for 20 minutes.
- After soaking, scrape off hard skin with something rough.
- Rub some oil on your hands. Vaseline is best.

If you can't feel normally, your hands can easily be injured:

- Use gloves or a cloth to hold hot pots and other hot things.
- Don't hold your hands near the fire if you are cold.
- Wrap cloth around the handles of tools, to protect your hands.
- Check your hands every day to see if there are any wounds.

HANDS

Check hands for

- Wounds
- Redness
- Heat

- Soak hands for 20 minutes
- Scrape away hard skin
- Rub oil on hands



Hands

Fire

- Don't let hands go near a fire

Cooking

- Use gloves or thick cloth to hold pots



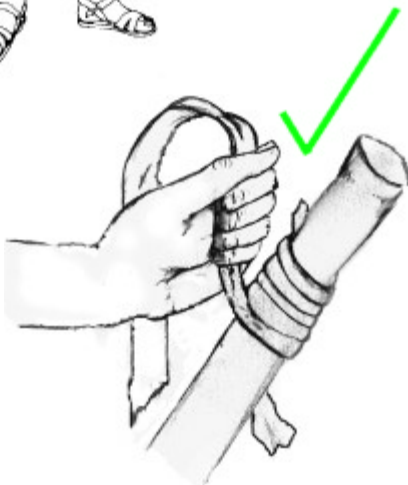
Hands

Danger

- Rough handles
- Thorns
- Hammers

Action

- Make handles smooth
- Put padding on handles
- Use gloves
- Use pliers for holding nails



Do you have any weakness or stiffness in the hands or fingers?

If “yes” :

You can help to reduce stiffness by doing the exercises shown on the next few pages.

You can take care of weak hands yourself

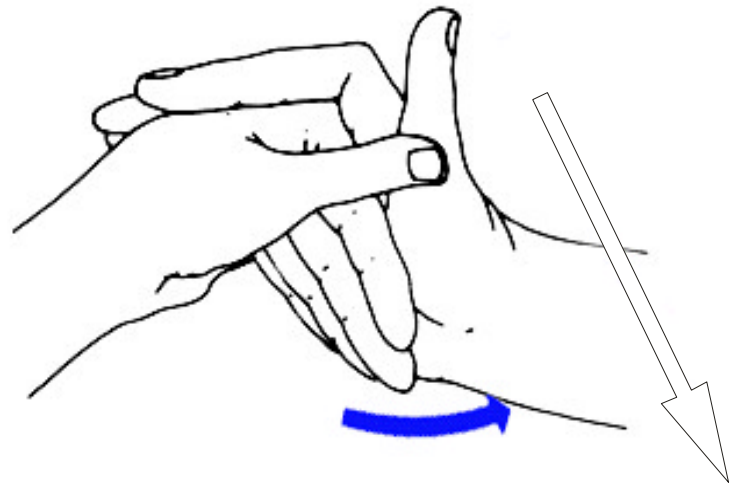
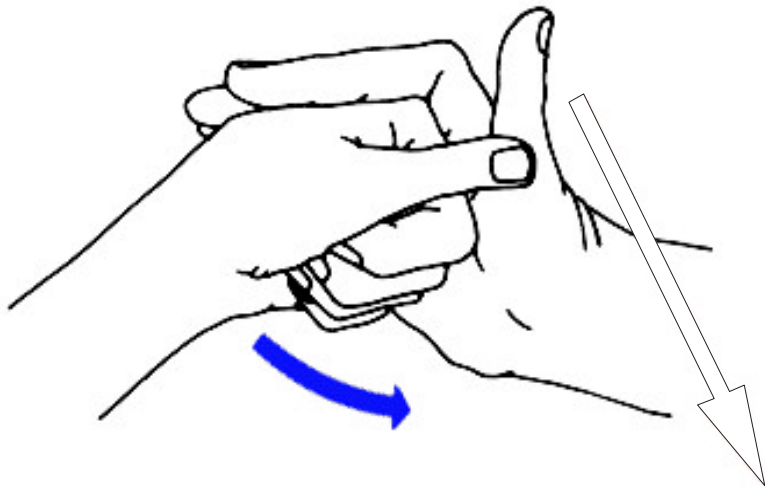
If you have weak hands, you can prevent them from getting worse:

- ❖ Develop the **exercise habit**.
- ❖ Exercise one hand at a time.

Exercise A: If your hands are weak but you can still grip things:

- ❖ Rub oil on your hands.
- ❖ Make a fist (not tight) with one hand.
- ❖ Put the fist into the other hand.
- ❖ Force the fist open so that the fingers go straight.
- ❖ Count to ten while you hold your fingers out straight.
- ❖ Do it as often as you can and it will become a habit.

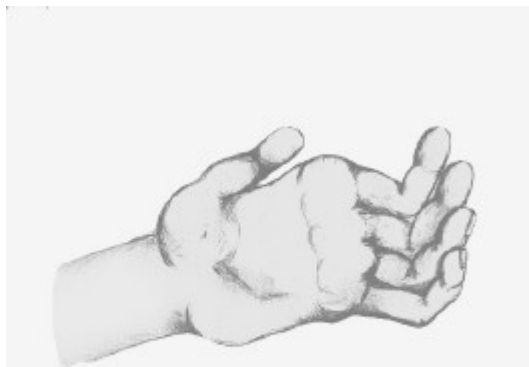
**Weak Hands
Exercise A**



Exercise B: If your hands are weak and you can no longer grip things properly:

- ❖ Rub oil on your hands.
- ❖ Sit down.
- ❖ Put your weak hand on your thigh so that the hand is turned up.
- ❖ Push your other hand slowly across the weak hand. (see picture). Push slowly across your thumb and fingers so that they are pushed flat on your thigh.
- ❖ While your fingers are flat, count to ten before you relax your hand.
- ❖ Do it as often as you can and it will become a habit.

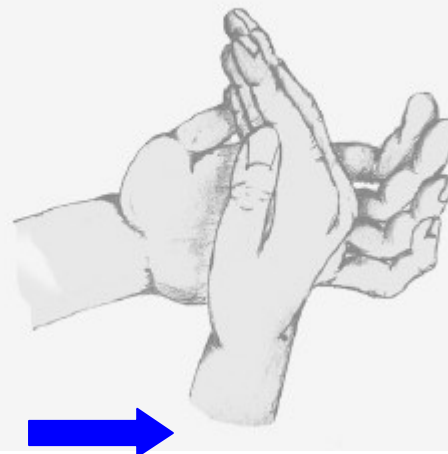
Weak Hands Exercise B



1.



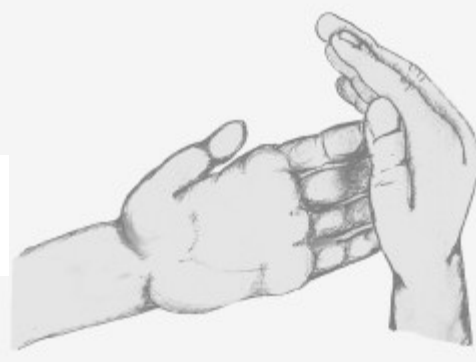
2.



3.



4.



BEST ADVICE

Exercise 3 times every day:

- Morning - Do each exercise 10 times**
- Noon - Do each exercise 10 times**
- Night - Do each exercise 10 times**

Do you have loss of feeling in your feet, or do you often get wounds on your feet?

If “yes”:

You need to take care of your feet to keep them healthy and avoid further damage; the next few pages show you how to care for your feet.

Keep your feet in good condition

The skin on your feet can get dry and cracked:

- Every morning and evening, soak your feet in water for 20 minutes.
- After soaking, scrape off hard skin with something rough, like a stone.
- Rub some oil on the skin of your feet. Vaseline is good.

If you walk far, you can get wounds on your feet without noticing them, especially if the feeling in your feet has gone.

To protect your feet, wear shoes or sandals that are soft inside but have hard soles. Don't wear tight shoes. Check shoes daily to see if there is any damage, and to see if there are sharp things inside.

Check your feet daily to see if there are any wounds.

Feet

Check footwear

- For breaks
- Stones
- Sharp things

Check feet

- For wounds
- Redness
- Heat

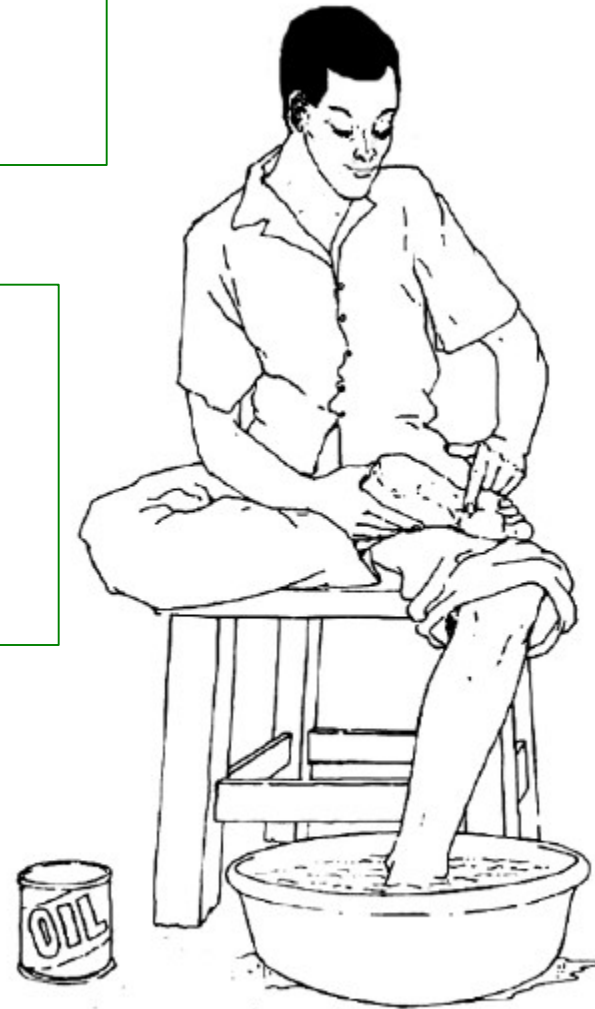


Feet

- Soak feet for 20 minutes
- Scrape away hard skin
- Rub oil on the feet

Check Feet For

- Wounds
- Redness
- Heat



This is how you can get wounds

- Your foot or hand may not be able to feel pain.
- Sharp things like thorns or nails or knives might break your skin, but you will not feel them.
- Hot things may burn your hands or feet but you will not feel them.
- If you walk your foot may become tired, but you will not feel it. If your foot is tired but it does not rest, the skin under the foot may break.

Things that make feet tired are:

- ❖ Walking too fast or too far
- ❖ Walking on hard things
- ❖ Walking without shoes or sandals
- ❖ Walking with bad shoes or sandals

Bad shoes or sandals are:

- ❖ Shoes or sandals that are not soft
- ❖ Shoes or sandals that are too tight
- ❖ Shoes or sandals that are broken

You can take care of wounds yourself

- If you have a wound, you must find a way to rest it. Try to lie down with your leg lifted.
- If you cannot lie down, stop working when you can and put your foot up, so that you do not stand on it.
- If you must walk, use crutches or a stick. Walk slowly and try to rest often.
- If you must walk remember to wear soft shoes or sandals.
- Soak, scrape and oil your feet every day. Then wrap a clean cloth around your foot to keep dirt and flies out of the wound. Keep old cloth for this purpose, but it must be clean. Use one cloth each day. Wash it well and dry it in the sun before using it again.
- Check your wounds every morning and evening:
 - ❖ If the wounds are getting bigger, or if the skin around the wound is very red and swollen, or if there is any pus, you must see a health worker.
 - ❖ If the wounds are looking smaller, and if they look clean, and if there is no pus, then you can just continue with self care.

Wounds

REST



or



or



Wounds

Check



Soak



Cover



Wound check



or



DANGER

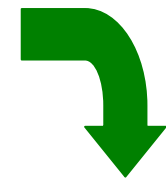
- Pus
- Bigger
- Deeper
- Swelling
- Bad smell



**See Health
Worker**

BETTER

- Smaller
- Clean looking
- No swelling



Self Care

You can take care of your life

- **Prove to others that you are able to prevent disability.**
- **Prove that you can make your life a good example for others to follow.**
- **Find ways to help other people.**
- **At all times, remember that you are special.**

This booklet was developed by Dr. Hugh Cross with guidance from:

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The contributions of the following in the development of the booklet are gratefully acknowledged:

Dr. Gemma Cabanos
Mrs. Janine Ebenso
Dr. P. Krishnamurthy
Miss Linda Lehman
Mrs. Margaret Mahato
Dr. Jean-Norbert Mputu
Dr. Ranganadha Rao
Mr. Douglas Soutar
Dr. Wim Van Brakel

The contributions of Miss Jean Watson and Miss Judith Cole are also gratefully acknowledged. Most of the drawings in this booklet were adapted from Jean Watson's book, *Essential Action to Minimise Disability in Leprosy Patients*, The Leprosy Mission International, 1986.