



health

Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**WORLD
LEPROSY
DAY**



What is leprosy?

Leprosy is one of the world's oldest diseases yet millions of people are still affected worldwide.

Leprosy is an infectious disease of the skin and nerves which, if left untreated, can lead to disability and blindness.

A curable disease

Leprosy is an entirely curable disease through a simple course of medication. Due to the lack of education and the stigma that surrounds the disease, some people are diagnosed too late and develop life changing disabilities.

Stigma of leprosy

People are subjected to discrimination and social exclusion simply because they - or someone in their family - have had the disease. The stigma often remains with a person long after they have been cured.

A disabling disease

Damage caused to nerves by leprosy leads to anaesthesia (loss of sensation) meaning people with leprosy cannot feel pain in those areas affected by the disease and do not notice if they cut their feet walking or burn their hand on a stove.

Without treatment, these injuries can become infected and ultimately can lead to the life changing disabilities commonly associated with leprosy.

Early Sign and Symptoms

- Muscle weakness;
- Numbness in the hands, arms, feet and legs;
- Skin lesions that have decreased sensation to touch, temperature, or pain. That do not heal after several weeks or months and are lighter than your normal skin tone.