

Lymphatic Filariasis

commonly known as elephantiasis

Lymphatic filariasis is a neglected tropical disease that impairs the lymphatic system and can lead to the abnormal enlargement of body parts, causing pain, severe disability and social stigma.



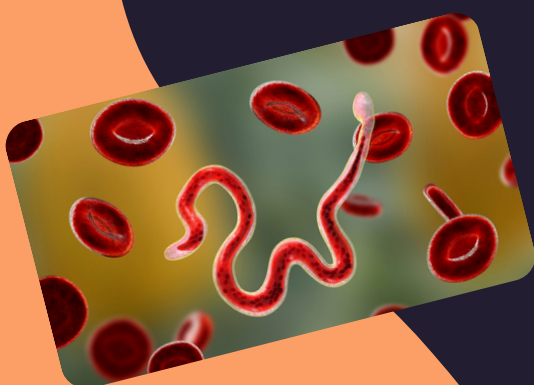
Basic prevention strategies include being aware if the disease is spread in your area and avoiding mosquito bites.

Infection occurs when filarial parasites are transmitted to humans through mosquitoes. A parasite is an organism (a living thing) that lives on or inside another organism. You can get lymphatic filariasis from a bite of an infectious mosquito. Parasite larvae are deposited to humans during a mosquito bite, and then they can enter the body. The larvae then migrate to the lymphatic vessels where they develop into adult worms and continue a cycle of transmission.



Infection is usually acquired in childhood and causes hidden damage to the lymphatic system.

Adult worms nest in the lymphatic vessels and disrupt the normal function of the lymphatic system. The worms can live for approximately 6–8 years and produce millions of larvae that circulate in the blood. Symptoms of LF infection can be asymptomatic but lead to acute and chronic conditions, and symptoms of these conditions often appear following damage. The result is insufficient circulation of the lymph fluid, resulting in buildup that causes massive swelling.



The painful and profoundly disfiguring visible manifestations of the disease occur later in life and can lead to permanent disability.

People affected by LF are not only physically disabled, but suffer mental, social, and financial losses contributing to stigma and poverty. While the disfigurement that limits physical mobility is easily seen, the psychological, social and economic effects of the disease are less visible, but no less difficult to bear. Eliminating lymphatic filariasis can prevent unnecessary suffering and contribute to the reduction of poverty.

WHO ranks the disease as one of the leading causes of permanent & long-term disability.



You are more likely to get lymphatic filariasis if you live in a country where parasitic worms are common and get repeated mosquito bites in the same country.

The World Health Organization estimates that globally, 120 million people in 72 countries are infected with LF, causing disability in over 40 million people. In the Americas region, only four countries continue to have LF: Guyana, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. In the Americas, about 12.6 million people are at risk of infection, and 90% of these people are in Haiti.



Strategies to prevent or eliminate this disease rely on mass drug administration to at risk populations, such as the population of Haiti.

Elimination of LF is possible by stopping the spread of infection with preventative chemotherapy. The recommended preventive chemotherapy strategy for LF elimination is mass drug administration (MDA). MDA involves administering an annual dose of medicines to the entire at-risk population. The medicines used have a limited effect on adult parasites but effectively reduce the density of microfilariae in the bloodstream and prevent the spread of parasites to mosquitoes. Haiti has a high burden of LF, and The World Health Organization identifies LF as an ongoing problem in Haiti.



Want to Learn More?

visit <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/lymphatic-filariasis>



References

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