

## Transmission

- Contact with food or household items contaminated with rodent urine or stools
- Blood, faeces/stool, vomit, urine/pee, saliva/spit, etc. from a person sick with Lassa fever enters the mouth, nose, eyes or a skin cut of another person
- Contact with household objects (for example, bedding or clothes) that have been contaminated with body fluids from a person who is sick or has died from Lassa fever
- Via contaminated medical equipment, such as reused needles
- Unprotected sex with a man who has recovered from Lassa fever (for up to three months after he recovers)

## Symptoms

- Four out of five people with Lassa fever have no symptoms.
- Starts with fever, general weakness and feeling unwell.
- Headache, sore throat, muscle pain, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, cough and stomach pain may follow.
- If severe, can include facial swelling, bleeding from the mouth, nose, vagina or anus, seizures, shaking, being confused and becoming unconscious.
- Deafness occurs in one in four people who survive Lassa fever.

## Prevention

- Store food in rodent-proof containers
- Dispose of rubbish away from the home (good environmental hygiene)
- Control rodents (including by keeping cats)
- Isolate (separate) people with Lassa fever
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, clothing) when caring for sick people
- Encourage handwashing with soap
- Provide safe and dignified burials
- Disinfect the homes and personal belongings of people who are sick or have died from Lassa fever
- Promote social distancing
- Dispose safely of waste that might be contaminated (by burning or burying it)
- Disinfect reusable supplies
- Provide psychosocial support

## Vulnerable people

- Pregnant women in the last three months of pregnancy

# If an epidemic occurs

- Identify suspected Lassa fever cases rapidly and refer them to care and treatment centres
- Trace contacts and follow them up
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, clothing) when caring for sick people
- Isolate people who are sick with Lassa fever
- Promote social distancing
- Promote handwashing in communities and health centres with soap, chlorine solution or hand-sanitizer
- Provide safe and dignified burials
- Disinfect the homes and personal belongings of people who are sick or have died from Lassa fever
- Dispose safely of waste that might be contaminated (by burning or burying it)
- Disinfect reusable supplies
- Male survivors of Lassa fever must practise safe sex for three months from the date on which they fell sick
- Provide psychosocial support

## Community-based assessment - questions

Make a map of the community and mark the information you gather on the map. Record other details.

- When did people start to fall sick with Lassa fever?
- How many people have fallen sick with Lassa fever? Where?
- How many have died? Where?
- How many people live in the affected community or area? How many children under five years of age live in the area?
- How many pregnant women live in the affected communities?
- Who and where are the vulnerable people?
- Where are the local health facilities and services? (Include traditional and community carers.)
- What are the community's habits, practices and beliefs about caring for and feeding sick people?
- What are the community's burial traditions, funeral procedures and practices?
- How do people in the community store their food? (Are rats or other rodents able to eat it?)
- Are there handwashing facilities in the community or at the health centre? Are soap and water always available?
- Is a social mobilization or health promotion programme in place?
- Which sources of information do people use most?
- Are rumours or is misinformation about Lassa fever spreading in the community?
- Are health workers, volunteers or people who have survived Lassa fever stigmatized, left out, threatened or harassed? What are the main effects on them and their lives?
- Do people in the community know about Lassa fever?
- Do people in the community know the main signs of Lassa fever and what to do if someone becomes sick (phone number to call, actions to take)?
- Do people in the community know how to protect themselves from Lassa fever?
- Are people in the community taking social distancing seriously? Why? Why not?

# Volunteer actions

See the following action tools for more information on what actions to take against lassa fever:

- 1 - Community-based surveillance
- 2 - Community mapping
- 3 - Communicating with the community
- 4 - Referral to health facilities
- 5 - Volunteer protection and safety
- 6 - Using personal protection equipment (PPE) for highly infectious diseases
- 19 - Psychosocial support (Psychological first aid (PFA))
- 20 - Isolating sick people
- 21 - Safe and dignified burials
- 28 - Social distancing
- 29 - Hygiene promotion
- 31 - Good food hygiene
- 34 - Handwashing with soap
- 35 - Handwashing in a highly infectious epidemic
- 36 - Vector control
- 38 - Waste disposal and clean-up campaigns
- 39 - Preparing and using disinfectants
- 40 - Building an incinerator for medical waste
- 41 - Handling and slaughtering animals
- 42 - Promoting safe sex
- 43 - Social mobilization and behaviour change