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Hansen's Disease / Leprosy (Mycobacterium leprae) 1997 Case Definition | CDC  
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Hansen's Disease / Leprosy (  
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1997 Case Definition  
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1997 Case Definition  
NOTE:  
A surveillance case definition is a set of uniform criteria used to define a disease for public health surveillance. Surveillance case definitions enable public health officials to classify and count cases consistently across reporting jurisdictions. Surveillance case definitions are not intended to be used by healthcare providers for making a clinical diagnosis or determining how to meet an individual patient’s health needs.  
Clinical Description  
A chronic bacterial disease characterized by the involvement primarily of skin as well as peripheral nerves and the mucosa of the upper airway. Clinical forms of Hansen's disease represent a spectrum reflecting the cellular immune response to  
Mycobacterium leprae  
. The following characteristics are typical of the major forms of the disease:  
Tuberculoid  
: one or a few well-demarcated, hypopigmented, and anesthetic skin lesions, frequently with active, spreading edges and a clearing center; peripheral nerve swelling or thickening also may occur  
Lepromatous  
: a number of erythematous papules and nodules or an infiltration of the face, hands, and feet with lesions in a bilateral and symmetrical distribution that progress to thickening of the skin  
Borderline (dimorphous)  
: skin lesions characteristic of both the tuberculoid and lepromatous forms  
Indeterminate  
: early lesions, usually hypopigmented macules, without developed tuberculoid or lepromatous features  
Laboratory Criteria For Diagnosis  
Demonstration of acid-fast bacilli in skin or dermal nerve, obtained from the full-thickness skin biopsy of a lepromatous lesion  
Case Classification  
Confirmed  
A clinically compatible case that is laboratory confirmed  
Comments  
The 1997 case definition appearing on this page was previously published in the 1990  
MMWR  
Recommendations and Reports titled  
Case Definitions for Public Health Surveillance  
. Thus, the 1990 and 1997 versions of the case definition are identical.  
Related Case Definition(s)  
Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) | 2025 Case Definition  
Hansen's Disease / Leprosy (  
Mycobacterium leprae  
) | 2013 Case Definition  
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NNDSS receives and shares case data from state, local, and territorial health departments to help public health monitor, control, and prevent serious diseases.  
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