# Extracted Content from https://ndc.services.cdc.gov/case-definitions/leprosy-hansens-disease/

Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) 2025 Case Definition | CDC  
Skip directly to site content  
Skip directly to search  
An official website of the United States government  
Here's how you know  
Official websites use .gov  
A .gov website belongs to an official government organization in the United States.  
Secure .gov websites use HTTPS  
A  
lock  
(  
) or  
https://  
means you've safely connected to the .gov website. Share sensitive information only on official, secure websites.  
National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)  
Explore Topics  
Search  
Search  
Clear Input  
For Everyone  
About About National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System  
What is Case Surveillance?  
Case Surveillance Modernization  
Infectious Disease Tables  
Non-Infectious Disease Data  
Technical Resource Center  
Case Surveillance in Action  
Contact Us  
View all  
Related Topics:  
NDC Application  
View All  
search  
close search  
search  
National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)  
Menu  
Close  
search  
For Everyone  
About About National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System  
What is Case Surveillance?  
Case Surveillance Modernization  
Infectious Disease Tables  
Non-Infectious Disease Data  
Technical Resource Center  
Case Surveillance in Action  
Contact Us  
View All  
Related Topics  
NDC Application  
View All  
National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)  
About About National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System  
What is Case Surveillance?  
Case Surveillance Modernization  
Infectious Disease Tables  
Non-Infectious Disease Data  
Technical Resource Center  
Case Surveillance in Action  
Contact Us  
View All  
September 19, 2024  
Case Definitions  
Message Mapping Guides  
Supporting Documents for Implementation  
Event Codes & Other Surveillance Resources  
Leprosy (Hansen's Disease)  
2025 Case Definition  
Leprosy (Hansen's Disease)  
2025 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.  
CSTE Position Statement(s)  
24-ID-05  
Background  
Leprosy, or Hansen’s disease (HD) is a chronic bacterial disease of the skin and peripheral nerves caused by bacteria in the  
Mycobacterium leprae  
complex, comprising  
M. leprae  
and  
M. lepromatosis  
. Routes of transmission are uncertain but believed to be by respiratory secretions through close, prolonged contact with untreated patients with leprosy or from prolonged or frequent direct contact with infected armadillos or their environment  
1,2  
. During 2013–2022, 124 to 216 cases per year were reported in the United States (U.S.)  
3  
, most in people with exposure outside the U.S., although endemic leprosy is found in some states. Leprosy can be cured with early diagnosis and treatment\*; in the U.S., case detection, treatment, and contact management have been major control strategies. Ongoing public health surveillance is needed to facilitate case detection and control efforts, which might include post-exposure prophylaxis  
4  
, typically arranged in coordination with public health agencies. Current surveillance case definitions do not include leprosy cases with rare presentations; this may inhibit implementation of control strategies for those cases.  
\* Note that leprosy cases may be classified into types for treatment purposes using Ridley Jopling or WHO classifications  
5  
. These Ridley Jopling and WHO classifications are not surveillance case definitions.  
Clinical Criteria  
A clinically compatible illness characterized by:  
Any of the following skin lesions  
an ill-defined hypopigmented or erythematous macule or patch  
a few well-demarcated, hypopigmented or erythematous skin lesions with reduced sensation  
multiple diffuse erythematous papules and nodules on arms and legs, sparing the torso  
an infiltration of skin, progressing to thickened skin, possibly with reduced sensation  
diffuse infiltration of the skin and neuropathy (e.g., "glove and stocking") (representing diffuse leprosy)  
OR  
The absence of skin lesions and thickening of a peripheral nerve trunk with pain or tenderness of the nerve (representing primary neural leprosy).  
Laboratory Criteria  
Confirmatory Laboratory Evidence:  
Detection of acid-fast bacilli in a nerve by the Fite-Faraco method,  
OR  
Detection of acid-fast bacilli in skin by the Fite-Faraco method, without growth of mycobacteria on culture\*\* (if done),  
OR  
Detection of  
M. leprae  
or  
M. lepromatosis  
in skin or a nerve by a nucleic acid detection test.\*\*\*  
Supportive Laboratory Evidence:  
Detection of non-sarcoid non-caseating granuloma with peripheral nerve involvement, without growth of mycobacteria on culture\*\*\*\* (if done)  
\*\* Note: The categorical labels used here to stratify laboratory evidence are intended to support the standardization of case classifications for public health surveillance. The categorical labels should not be used to interpret the utility or validity of any laboratory test methodology.  
\*\*\* If acid-fast bacilli are detected in skin only, mycobacterial culture negativity is highly recommended to rule out infection with mycobacteria other than those in the M. leprae complex. To rule out M. haemophilum, hemin or iron-citrate containing medium would be needed. To rule out M. xenopi or M. marinum, incubation at 42 and 30 degrees centigrade, respectively, would be needed.  
\*\*\*\* Note that a negative nucleic acid test on a tissue specimen does not rule out Mycobacterium leprae or Mycobacterium lepromatosis as the cause of illness.  
Epidemiologic Linkage  
Prolonged close contact  
6,7  
with an untreated person with new or recurring leprosy,  
OR  
Residency or repeated travel in a region with higher endemicity (prevalence >1 case per 10,000 population or new case detection rate ≥ 50 per million population per year) for leprosy  
8  
,  
OR  
Prolonged or frequent, direct contact† with armadillos, especially nine-banded armadillos, or soil in the environment in which they live.  
† Prolonged or frequent direct contact refers to activities such as raising, maintaining, butchering, hunting, field dressing, or consuming armadillos. It does not refer to brief, cursory, or sporadic touching such as might occur with a visitor to a petting zoo.  
Criteria to Distinguish a New Case from an Existing Case  
For surveillance purposes, a new case of leprosy should be enumerated by public health based on the following criteria:  
A person should be enumerated as a case if not previously enumerated as a case,  
OR  
A person was previously enumerated as a case, followed by adequate treatment with current, standard, multidrug therapeutic regimen and newly meets the criteria for a confirmed or probable case,  
OR  
A person was previously enumerated as a case, but genetic sequencing results are distinctly different in a new positive specimen from a previous positive specimen,  
OR  
A person was previously enumerated as a case, but the M.  
leprae  
complex species identified (e.g.,  
M. leprae  
vs.  
M.  
lepromatosis  
) in a new positive specimen is different than identified in a previous specimen in the same person.  
Case Classification  
Suspect  
Meets clinical criteria for a clinically compatible illness with skin lesions  
AND  
meets epidemiologic linkage criteria,  
OR  
Meets clinical criteria for a clinically compatible illness with skin lesions  
AND  
meets supportive laboratory evidence.  
Probable  
Meets clinical criteria for primary neural leprosy  
AND  
meets epidemiologic linkage criteria.  
Confirmed  
Meets clinical criteria  
AND  
confirmatory laboratory evidence.  
References  
Richardus, J. H., Ignotti, E., & Smith, W. C. S. (2016). Epidemiology of leprosy. In D. M. Scollard & T. P. Gillis (Eds.),  
International textbook of leprosy  
(Chapter 1.1). American Leprosy Missions.  
https://doi.org/10.1489/itl.1.1  
Oliveira, I., Deps, P., & Antunes, J. (2019). Armadillos and leprosy: From infection to biological model.  
Revista do Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo  
, 61, e44.  
https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-9946201961044  
Health Resources and Services Administration. (n.d.). National Hansen’s disease (leprosy) program: Caring and curing since 1894.  
https://www.hrsa.gov/hansens-disease  
(Last reviewed November 2023)  
Wang, L., Wang, H., Yan, L., et al. (2023). Single-dose rifapentine in household contacts of patients with leprosy.  
New England Journal of Medicine  
, 388, 1843–1852.  
https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2205487  
Kumar, B., Uprety, S., & Dogra, S. (2017). Clinical diagnosis of leprosy. In D. M. Scollard & T. P. Gillis (Eds.),  
International textbook of leprosy  
(Chapter 2.1). American Leprosy Missions.  
https://doi.org/10.1489/itl  
World Health Organization. (2020). Leprosy/Hansen disease: Contact tracing and post-exposure prophylaxis: Technical guidance. World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/336679  
Health Resources and Services Administration. (n.d.). NHDP guide to the management of Hansen’s disease. National Hansen’s Disease Programs. https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/hansens-disease/hansens-disease-guide-management.pdf. Accessed March 13, 2024.  
World Health Organization. (n.d.). The Global Health Observatory: Leprosy (Hansen’s disease). https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/leprosy-hansens-disease. Accessed March 13, 2024.  
Related Case Definition(s)  
Hansen's Disease / Leprosy (  
Mycobacterium leprae  
) | 2013 Case Definition  
Hansen's Disease / Leprosy (  
Mycobacterium leprae  
) | 1997 Case Definition  
Back to Top  
Sources  
Print  
Share  
Facebook  
LinkedIn  
Twitter  
Syndicate  
Content Source:  
Case Definitions  
Message Mapping Guides  
Supporting Documents for Implementation  
Event Codes & Other Surveillance Resources  
National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)  
NNDSS receives and shares case data from state, local, and territorial health departments to help public health monitor, control, and prevent serious diseases.  
View All  
About About National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System  
What is Case Surveillance?  
Case Surveillance Modernization  
Infectious Disease Tables  
Non-Infectious Disease Data  
Technical Resource Center  
Case Surveillance in Action  
Contact Us  
View All  
Sign up for Email Updates  
Contact CDC  
Organization  
Policies  
Web Policies  
Languages  
Languages  
Español  
Language Assistance  
Archive  
CDC Archive  
Public Health Publications  
Contact Us  
About CDC  
Organization  
Policies  
Web Policies  
Languages  
Languages  
Español  
Language Assistance  
Archive  
CDC Archive  
Public Health Publications  
HHS.gov  
USA.gov