

In Dermatology

Hansen's Disease (HD)



HD is a chronic disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. It mainly affects the skin and nerves. If untreated, there can be progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes. There are two basic types of leprosy: lepromatous leprosy (LL) and tuberculoid leprosy (TT). Either of these may be classified as borderline (borderline lepromatous or BL and borderline tuberculoid or BT). Patients who fall between the two basic types may be classified as mid-borderline (BB); and patients with vaguely defined (often early) lesions may be classified as indeterminate (I). There is a pure neuritic form that shows no skin patches but only areas of sensory impairment and peripheral nerve thickening.

For purpose of treatment HD is classified as paucibacillary (TT, BT) and multibacillary (BB, BL, LL). Paucibacillary is generally treated with once monthly Rifampicin and daily Dapsone for 6 months. Multibacillary is treated with once monthly Rifampicin and Clofazimine with daily Dapsone and Clofazimine. Because of the development of dapsone-resistance, combination therapy is the current accepted standard for all types of leprosy. Minocycline, ofloxacin, and clarithromycin show promise in the treatment of rifampin-resistant leprosy. ENL and reversal reactions are treated with prednisone 60 mg/day for several days until improvement is seen; then tapered over several weeks. For detailed description the reader is referred to textbooks on HD.

*Prof. Jayakar Thomas
Consultant Dermatologist, Chennai*