

Leishmaniasis

Leishmaniasis is transmitted to humans through the bites of the sandfly.

Sandfly is a sand colored insect residing in jungles and dens in temperate climates.

Cutaneous Leishmaniasis is the most common subtypes seen in Sri Lanka. In addition, leishmaniasis may rarely affect mucosal sites (Mucocutaneous Leishmaniasis) and the internal organs (Visceral Leishmaniasis).

1. What are the clinical features?

Clinical features may appear immediately after a sandfly bite or they may take several months. It mainly appears as a reddish papule/bump in exposed areas of the body. In a several weeks' time, it turns in to nodule/ larger bump with an ulcer in the center. There may be one to several ulcers.

2. How to diagnose the disease?

Most of the time your dermatologist will diagnose the condition based only on clinical examination. Sometimes, it may be necessary to do a skin biopsy or a tissue fluid smear to correctly diagnose the disease.

3. How is the disease treated?

Most of the times, the disease may heal spontaneously leaving an unsightly scar and spontaneous resolution may take months to complete. Therefore, every patient is actively treated in order to prevent disfiguring scars and to prevent spread of the disease.

Treatment options are:

- Weekly injections of Stibogluconate in to lesions until they are healed
- Spraying of liquid Nitrogen into lesions (Cryotherapy)
- Radiofrequency heat therapy

In addition to above measures, various other injections or medicines may be recommended by your doctor.

4. How to prevent Leishmaniasis?

- By controlling the breeding places and habitats of the sandfly to prevent the spread of the disease
- By keeping your home environment clean
- By preventing the bite of the sandfly
- Insecticide impregnated nets, sprays
- Applying insect repellents on your skin
- Avoiding outdoor activities and using long sleeved clothes to cover your body during the hours sandfly remains active (from evening to early morning hours of the day)

