

Hansen's Disease (Leprosy)

Agent: *Mycobacterium leprae* (bacteria)

Mode of Transmission: Person-to-person, probably through nasal secretions from persons with untreated lepromatous disease (those with discolored spots on the skin).

Signs/Symptoms: A chronic disease with varying symptoms, including skin lesions (tuberculoid leprosy); discolored, flat spots on the skin (lepromatous leprosy); nasal congestion; nosebleeds; and nerve damage.

Prevention: Early diagnosis and treatment is important. Hand washing when in contact with patients with lepromatous leprosy and disinfection of surfaces contaminated with infectious nasal secretions should be performed until treatment is established.

No cases of Hansen's disease were reported in Virginia during 2008. The last reported case occurred in 2007 in an adult male immigrant from South America where the disease was likely to have been acquired. The five year average for the occurrence of this condition is less than one case per year.