

I can do it myself!

**Tips for people affected by leprosy
who want to prevent disability**



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

I can do it myself!

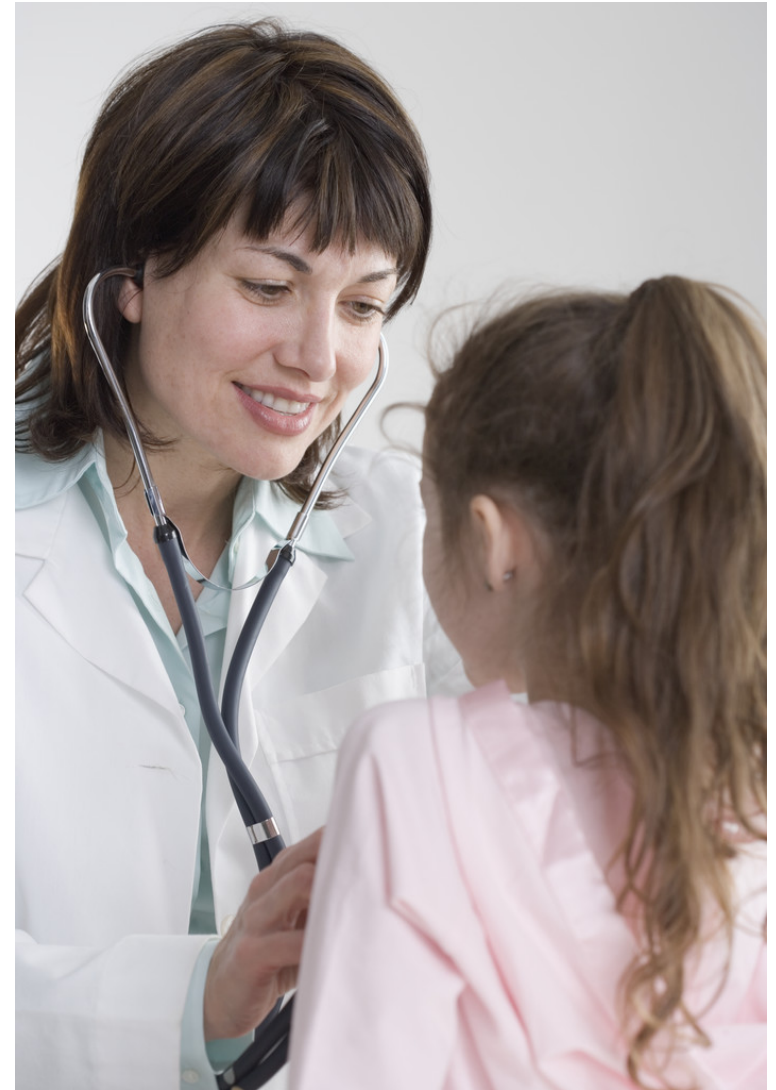
Tips for people affected by leprosy who want to prevent disability

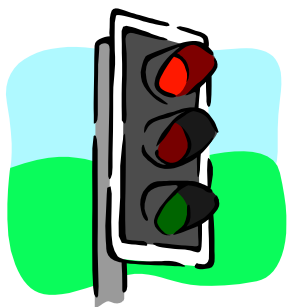


People with leprosy who take medicines given to them at a health center regularly have less chance of disability.



Take your medicine every day, even if your patches look better.

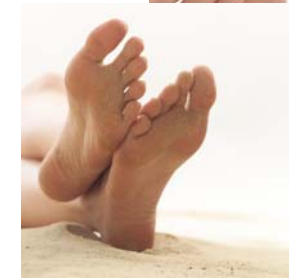




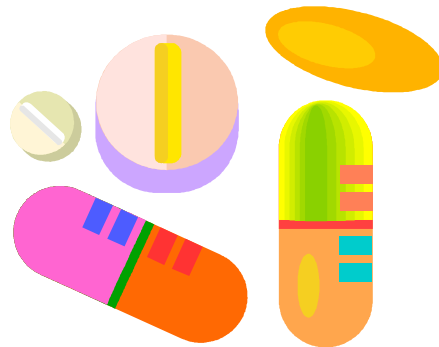
If you notice any of the following, you must go and tell a health worker immediately:



- × If your patches become red, painful, and swollen.
- × If you have fever and/or pain in your arms or legs.
- × If small, painful red bumps appear on your skin.
- × If your eyes become red and painful.
- × If you notice that things feel different when you hold them, or that your hands or feet are feeling weak.



Medicines for leprosy can cure the disease completely!



You have the power to prevent disability.

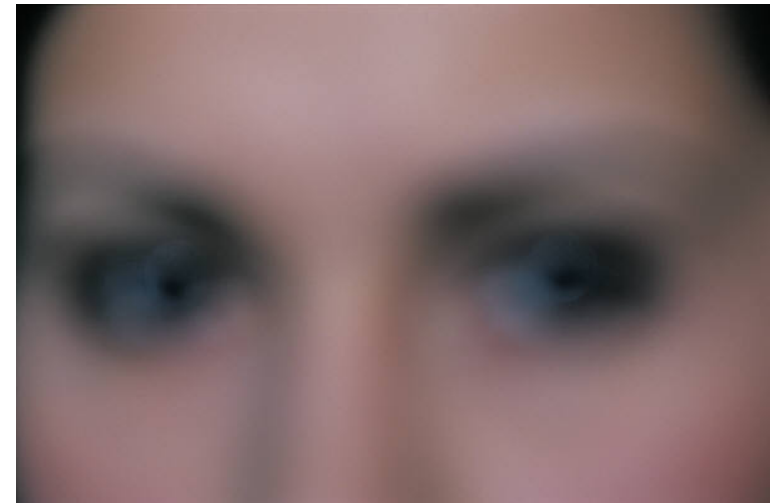
The tips given in this book are to show you how to do it.

- x Is it difficult for you to close your eyes properly?*
- x Do you often have red eyes?*

If “yes” to one or both of the above:

You need to take care of your eyes to prevent damage.

The next few pages will help you learn how to take care of your eyes.



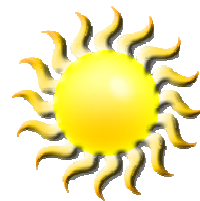


Keep your eyes in good condition!

Dust, sunlight, and dryness can damage eyes.
Close your eyes often to protect them.
Make it a regular habit.

During the day:

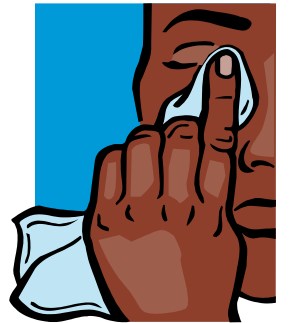
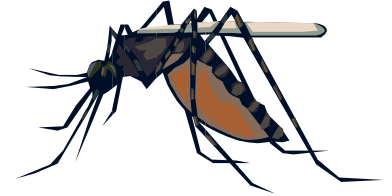
- ☑ Wear sunglasses or a hat. Ladies can wear a shawl or scarf that can be pulled over the face.
- ☑ Be careful of flies. Chase them away with a fan, flyswatter, or fly whisk.



At night:



- ☑ Sleep under a net or blanket, or tie a cloth loosely over your eyes to keep out dust and insects.
- ☑ If your eyes itch, **do NOT rub them**. Pull your eye closed by stretching the skin at the side of your eyes. Use eye drops.
- ☑ Clean around your eyes and check them in a mirror every morning and every evening. If you cannot check them yourself, ask a friend to check them for you. If your eyes are red, you should see a health worker or a doctor immediately.





Danger

- × Dust
- × Dryness

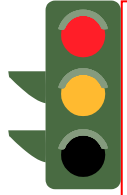
Eyes



Action

- ✓ Tightly close eyes often





Danger

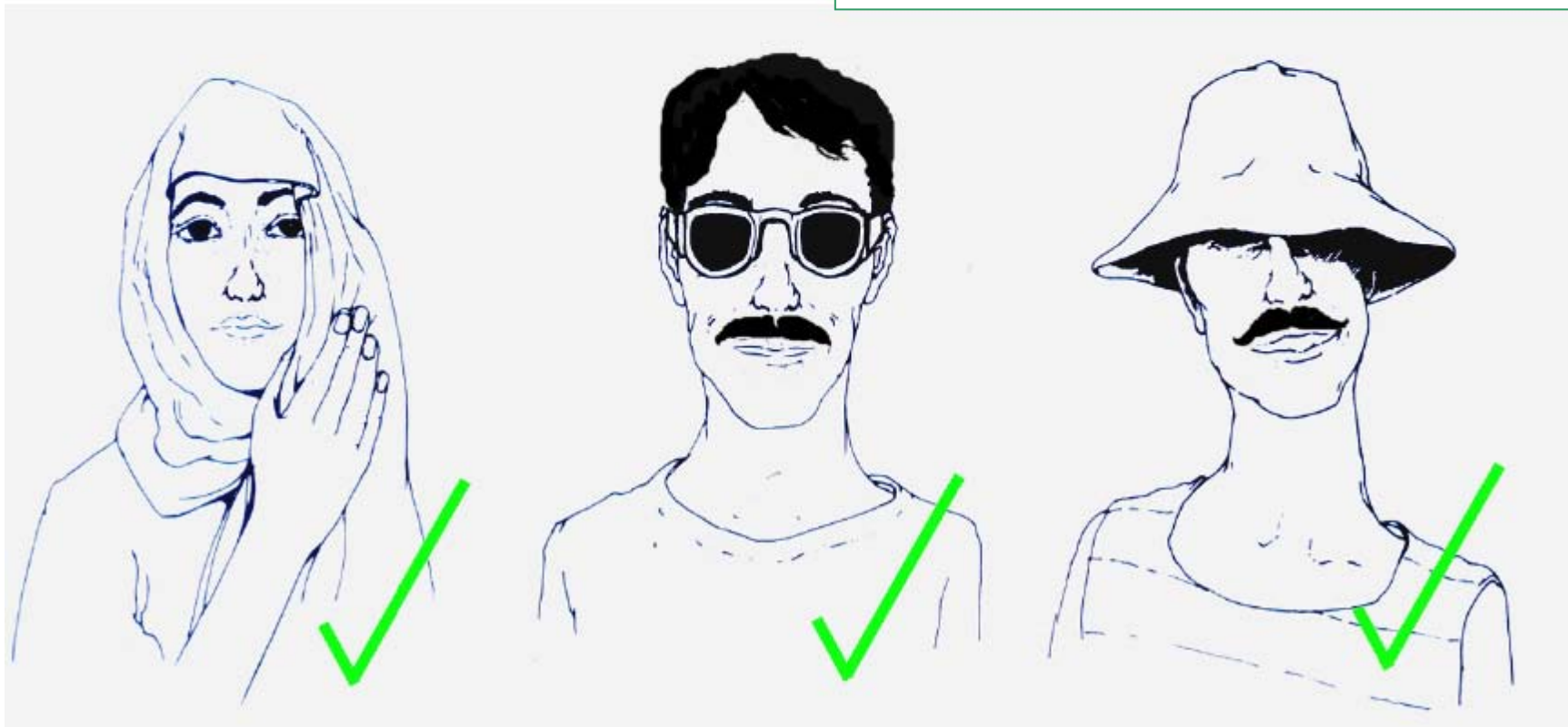
- × Dust
- × Dryness

Eyes



Action

- ✓ Wear a shawl or scarf to cover eyes
- ✓ Wear sunglasses
- ✓ Wear a hat



Eyes

Danger

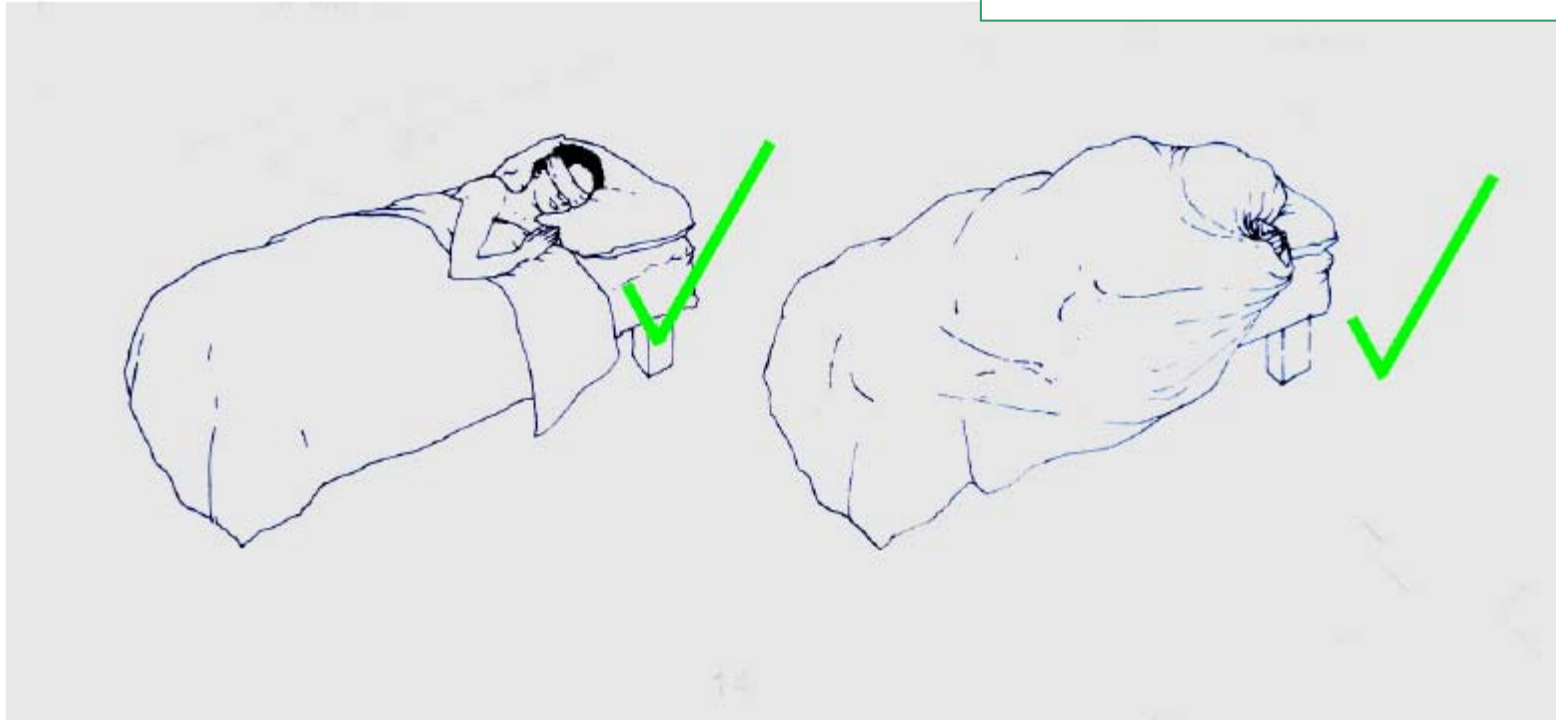
- × Night-time insects
- × Dirt
- × Dust



Action

Cover with a:

- ☑ Blanket
- ☑ Cloth cover
- ☑ Mosquito net



Eyes

Danger

Rubbing

× Red eyes

× Sore eyes



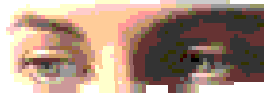
Action

✓ Pull eyelid to close eye



Danger
× Redness

Eyes



Action

- ✓ Check your eyes in the mirror
- ✓ Ask friends to check your eyes
- ✓ See a health worker or a doctor right away



Danger

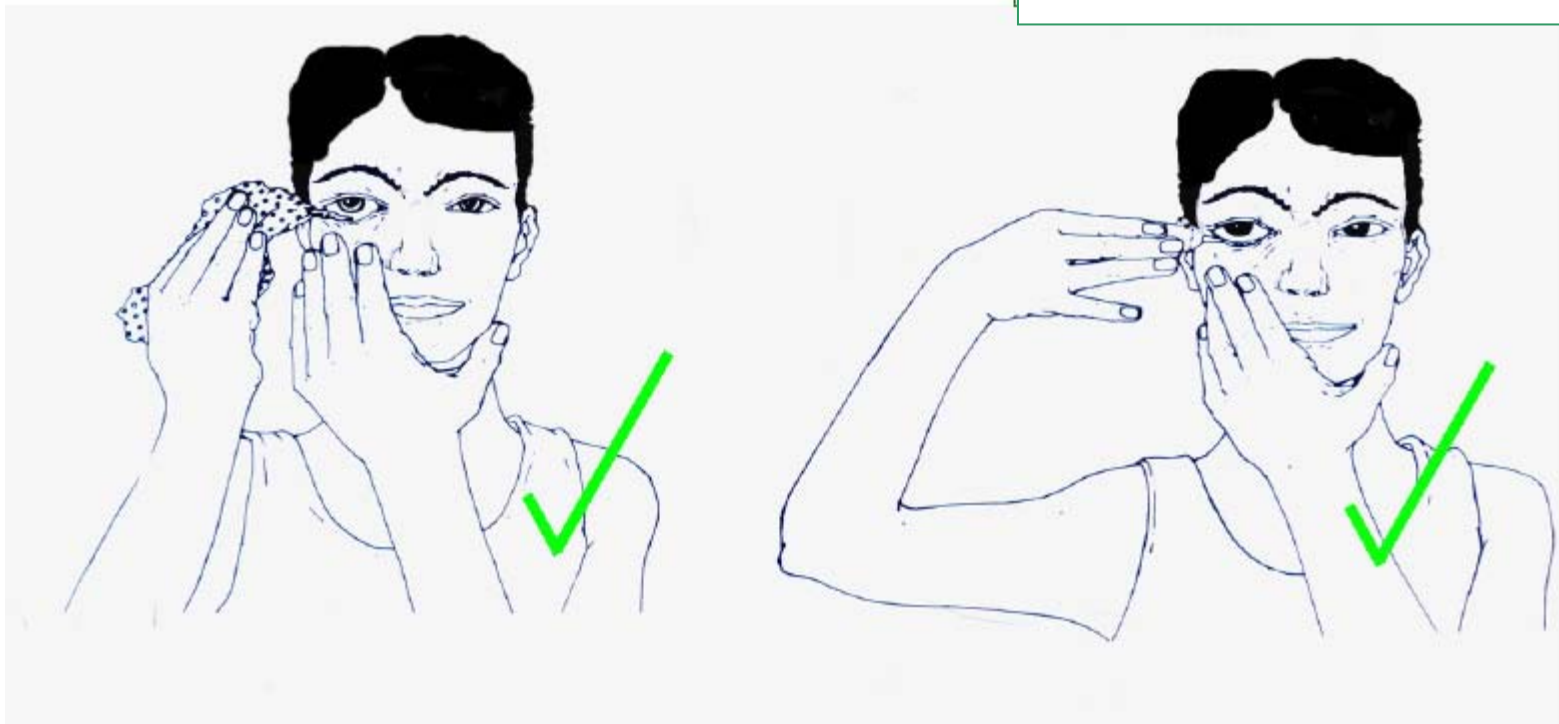
× Dirt

Eyes



Action

- ☑ Clear away dirt with a clean cloth
- ☑ Use eye drops

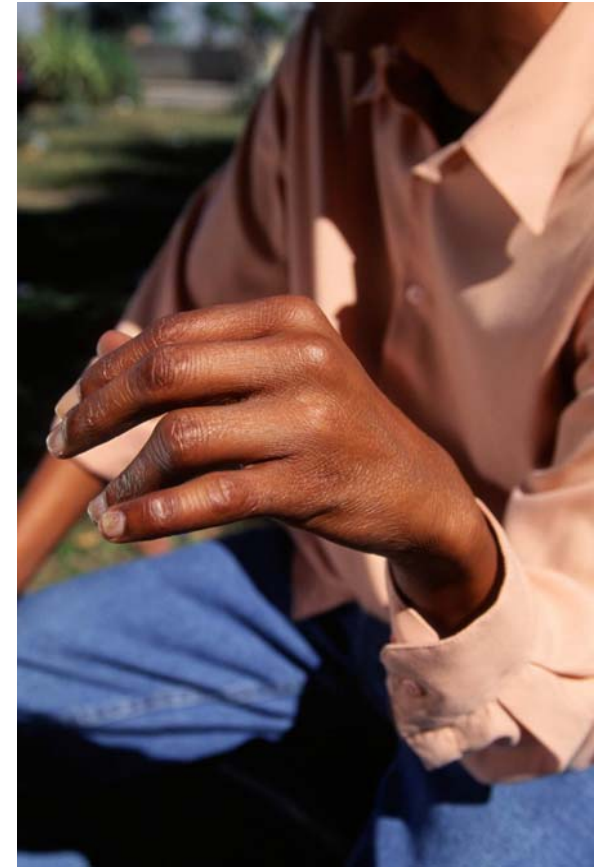


- × ***Do you have a loss of feeling in your hands?***
- × ***Do you often have wounds on your hands?***

If “yes” to one or both of the above:

You need to take care of your hands to keep them healthy and to prevent more damage.

The next few pages will show you how to care for your hands.

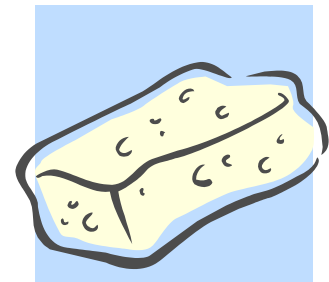
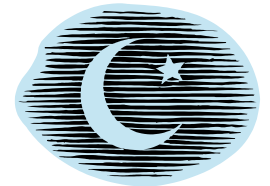


Keep your hands in good condition!

The skin on your hands can become dry and cracked:

- ☑ Every morning and evening, soak your hands in water for 20 minutes.
- ☑ After soaking, scrape off hard skin with something rough.
- ☑ Rub some oil on your hands. Vaseline is best.

Do not use animal fat!



If you can't feel what you touch or have less feeling, your hands can easily be injured!

- ☑ Use potholders, mitts, a cloth or gloves to hold hot pots and pans and other hot things.
- ☑ *Don't hold your hands near the fire* if you are cold.
- ☑ Wrap a cloth around tool handles to protect your hands, or wear gloves.
- ☑ Check your hands every day to see if there are any wounds.

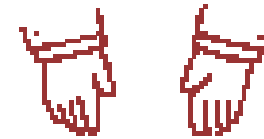


Hands

Check hands for

- × Wounds
- × Redness
- × Heat

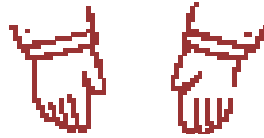
- ✓ Soak hands in water, at room temperature, for 20 minutes
- ✓ Scrape away hard skin
- ✓ Rub oil on hands
(but not animal fat!)



Fire

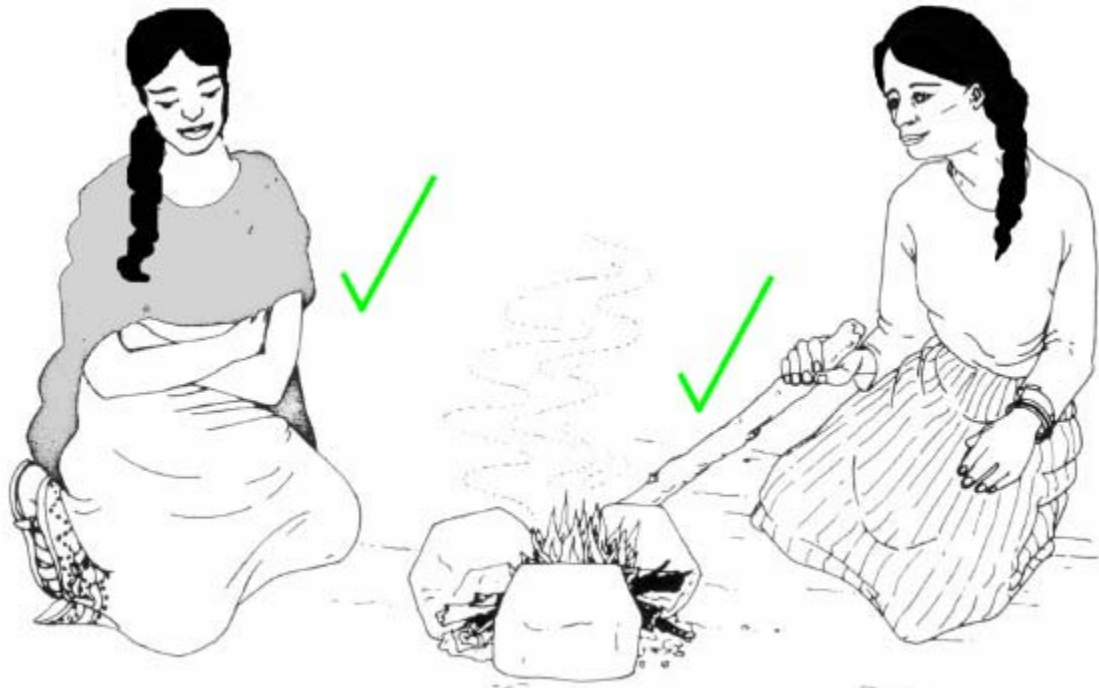
× Don't let your hands get near a fire

Hands



Cooking

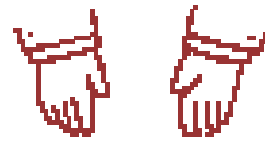
- ✓ Use mitts, potholders, or a thick cloth to hold pots



Danger

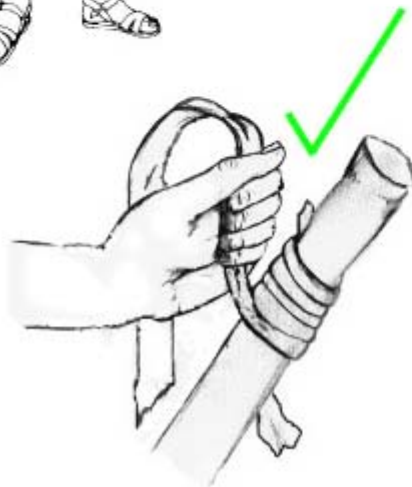
- × Rough handles
- × Thorns
- × Hammers

Hands



Action

- ✓ Make handles smooth
- ✓ Put padding on handles
- ✓ Use gloves
- ✓ Use pliers for holding nails



Do you have any weakness or stiffness in the hands or fingers?



If "yes":

You can help to reduce stiffness by doing the exercises shown on the next few pages.

You can take care of weak hands yourself!



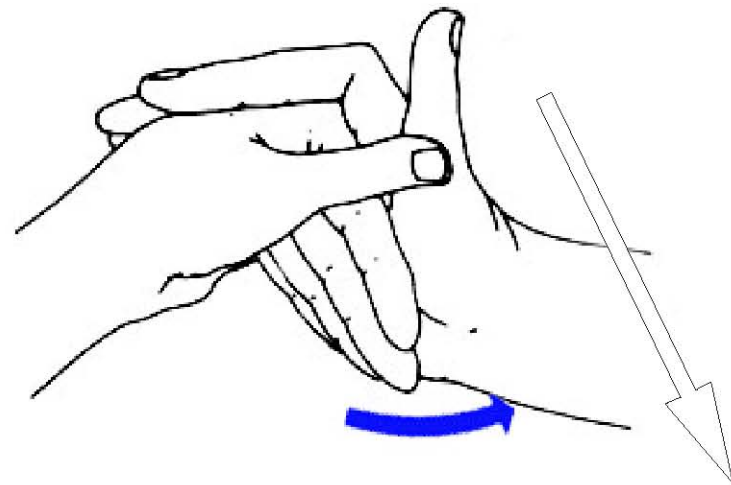
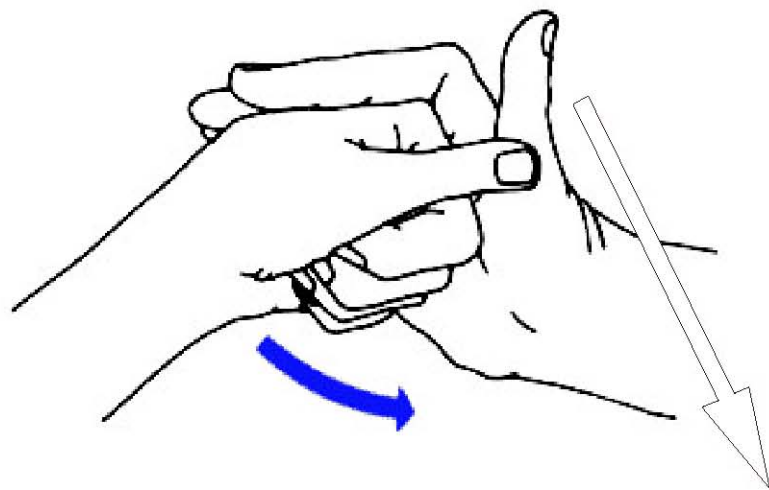
If you have weak hands, you can keep them from getting worse by:

- ✓ Developing the **exercise habit**.
- ✓ Exercising one hand at a time.

Exercise A: If your hands are weak but you can still grip things:

- ✓ Rub oil on your hands.
- ✓ Make a fist (not tight) with one hand.
- ✓ Put your fist in your other hand.
- ✓ Force your fist open so that your fingers go straight.
- ✓ Count to ten while you hold your fingers out straight.
- ✓ Do this as often as you can so that it becomes a habit.

Weak Hands: *Exercise A*



***Exercise B:* If your hands are so weak you can no longer grip things properly:**

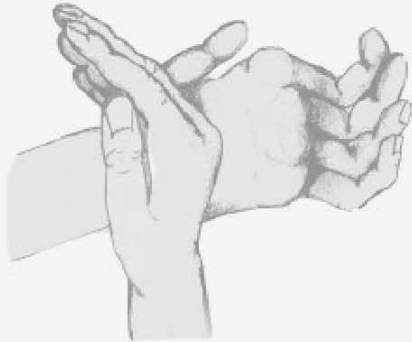
- ☑ Rub oil on your hands.
- ☑ Sit down.
- ☑ Put your weak hand on your thigh so that your hand is turned up.
- ☑ Push your other hand slowly across your weak hand (see the pictures on the next page). Push slowly across your thumb and fingers so that they are pushed flat on your thigh.
- ☑ While your fingers are flat, count to ten before you relax your hand.
- ☑ Do this as often as you can so that it comes a habit.



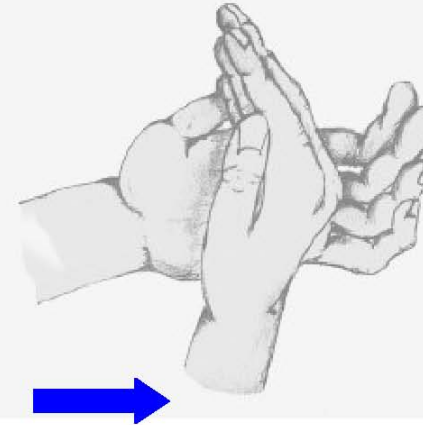
**Weak Hands:
Exercise B**



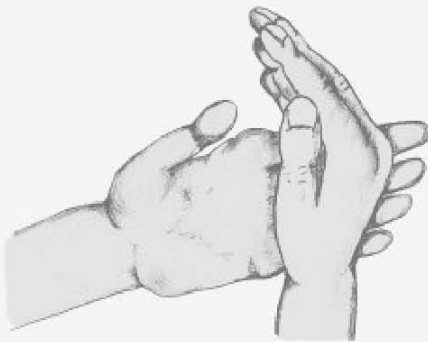
1.



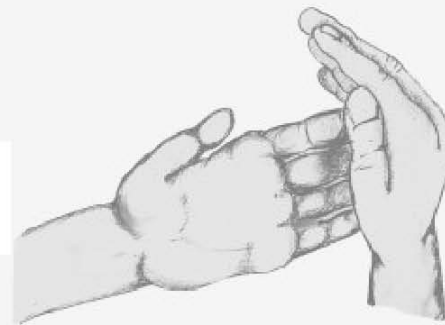
2.



3.



4.



Best Advice

Exercise 3 times every day:

☑ *Morning:* Do each exercise 10 times



☑ *Noon:* Do each exercise 10 times



☑ *Night:* Do each exercise 10 times



***Do you have a loss of feeling in your feet,
or do you often get wounds on your feet?***

If "yes":

**You need to take care of your feet
to keep them healthy and
to avoid further damage.**

**The next few pages will show you
how to care for your feet.**

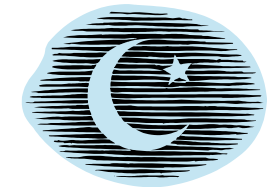


Keep your feet in good condition!

The skin on your feet can get dry and cracked:



Every morning and evening,
soak your feet in water,
at room temperature, for 20 minutes.



After soaking them, scrape off the hard skin
with something rough, like a (pumice) stone

Rub some oil on the skin of your feet.
Vaseline is good.

Do not use animal fat!



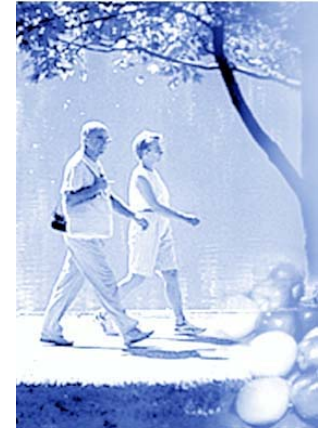
If you walk a lot or very far, you can get wounds on your feet without noticing them, especially if the feeling in your feet is gone.

To protect your feet:

- ☑ Wear shoes or sandals that are soft inside but that have hard soles.

× Don't wear tight shoes.

- ☑ Check shoes daily to see if there is any damage, and to see if there are sharp things inside.
- ☑ Check your feet daily to see if there are any wounds.



Feet

Check footwear for

- × Breaks
- × Stones
- × Sharp objects



Check feet for

- × Wounds
- × Redness
- × Heat



Feet



- ✓ Soak feet for 20 minutes
- ✓ Scrape away the hard skin
- ✓ Rub oil on your feet

Check feet for

- × Wounds
- × Redness
- × Heat



This is how you can get wounds

- × Your foot or hand may not be able to feel pain.
- × Sharp things like thorns, nails, or knives might break your skin, but you will not feel it.
- × Hot things may burn your hands or feet but you will not feel it.
- × If you walk, your foot may become tired, but you will not feel it. If your foot is tired but does not rest, the skin under the foot may break.



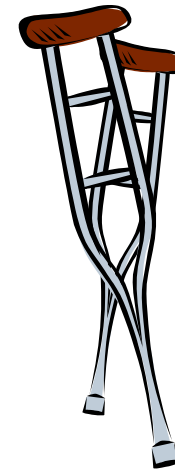
Things that make your feet tired are:

- × Walking too far or too fast
- × Walking on hard things
- × Walking barefoot, without shoes or sandals
- × Walking with shoes or sandals that are broken or in bad condition, such as
 - Shoes or sandals that aren't soft
 - Shoes or sandals that are too tight
 - Shoes with holes or tears



You can take care of wounds yourself!

- ☑ If you have a wound, you need to find a way to rest it. Try to lie down with your leg lifted.
- ☑ If you cannot lie down, stop working if you can and put your foot up, so that you are not standing on it.
- ☑ If you must walk, use crutches, a walking stick, or a cane. Walk slowly and try to rest often.
- ☑ If you must walk, remember to wear soft shoes or sandals.



You can take care of wounds yourself!

- ☑ Soak, scrape, and oil your feet every day. Then wrap a clean cloth around your foot to keep dirt and flies out of the wound. You can use old cloths or rags for this purpose, but they must be clean. Use one cloth each day. Wash it well and dry it in the sun before using it again.
- ☑ Check your wounds every morning and every evening.
- ☑ **If the wounds are getting bigger, or if the skin around the wound is very red and swollen, or if there is any pus, you must see a health worker quickly.**
- ☑ If the wounds are looking smaller, and if they look clean, and if there is no pus, you can just continue to care for yourself.



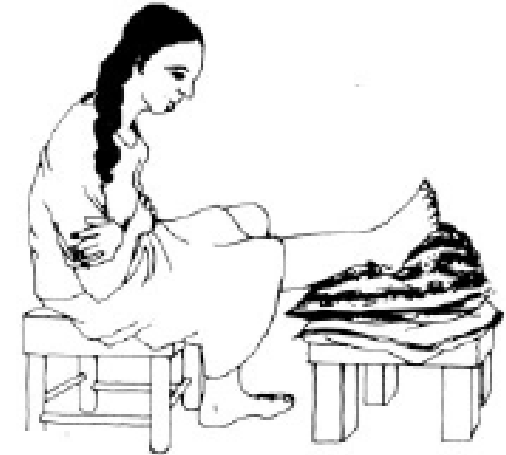
Wounds



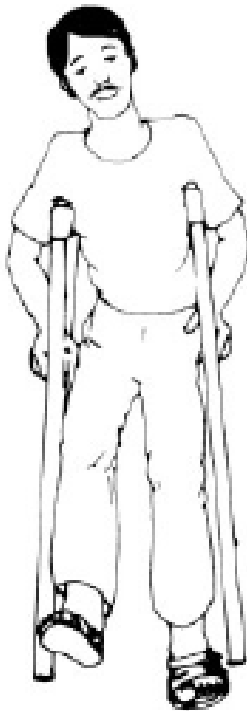
Rest



or



or



Wounds

Check



Soak

or



Cover



Wound Check



or



Danger

- × Pus
- × Bigger
- × Deeper
- × Swollen
- × Bad smell

See a health
worker

Better

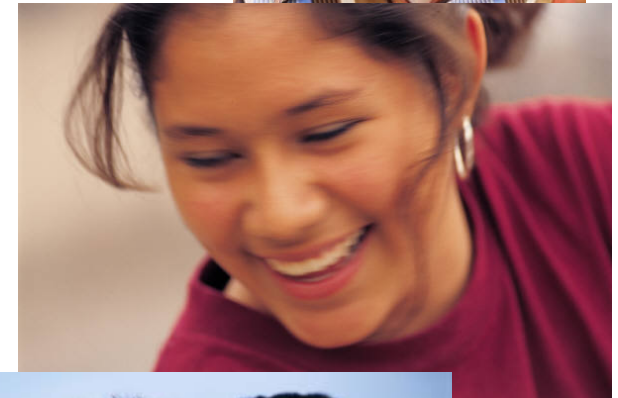
- ✓ Smaller
- ✓ Clean-looking
- ✓ Not swollen

Self-Care



You can take charge of your life!

- ☑ Prove to others that you are able to prevent disability.
- ☑ Prove that you can make your life a good example for others to follow.
- ☑ You can improve the quality of your life.
- ☑ Find ways to help other people.
- ☑ Remember to take good care of yourself.
- ☑ At all times, remember that you are special.



This booklet was developed by Dr. Hugh Cross with guidance from:

- Dr. Vijay Pannikar – Team Leader, WHO Global Leprosy Programme
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The contributions of the following in the development of the booklet are gratefully acknowledged:

- Dr. Gemma Cabanos
- Sra. Janine Ebenso
- Dr. P. Krishnamurthy
- Srta. Linda Lehman
- Sra. Margaret Mahato
- Dr. Jean-Norbert Mputu
- Dr. Ranganadha Rao
- Sr. Douglas Soutar
- Dr. Wim Van Brakel

The contributions of Miss Jean Watson and Miss Judith Cole are also gratefully acknowledged.

Most of the drawings in this booklet were adapted from Jean Watson's book, *Essential Action to Minimise Disability in Leprosy Patients*, The Leprosy Mission International, 1986.

Originally written in English for SEARO. English version for the Americas prepared by the PAHO Communicable Disease Unit. Additional graphics also added by PAHO.

