

A Filariasis - Free Me

A Campaign on Prevention and Control
of Filariasis for Health Promoting Schools



Urbani
School Health Kit



**World Health
Organization**

Western Pacific Region

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Urbani School Health Kit
TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

A Filariasis - Free Me

A Campaign on the Prevention and Control
of Filariasis for Health Promoting Schools



What should children **know** about filariasis?



What is filariasis?

Lymphatic filariasis (commonly known as elephantiasis) is a disease caused by parasites or worms (microfilariae) that weaken and disfigure a person. Disfigurement can be in the form of enlargement of the entire leg or arm, breasts and genitals. This happens when parasites attack the lymph nodes and lymph vessels that maintain the delicate balance between the tissues and blood—an important component for the body's immune system.

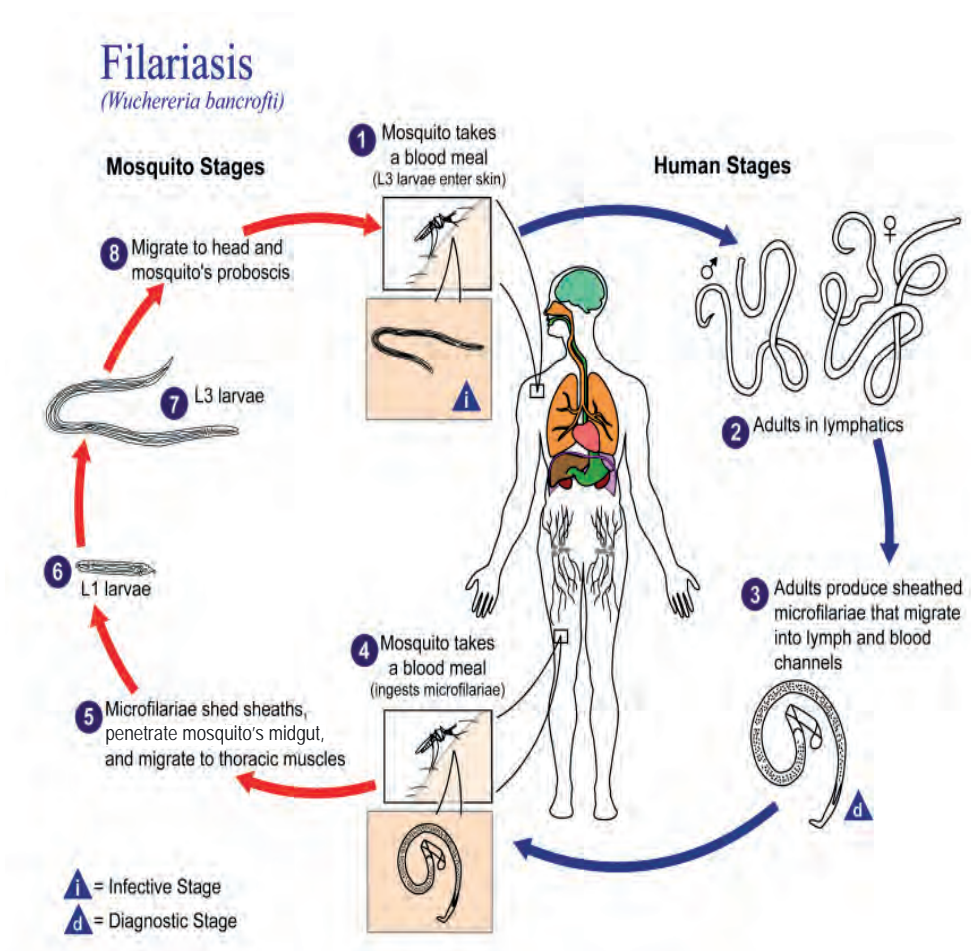
The thread-like worms, which can be between 4-12 cm long, live and mature as adults in the body's lymph nodes and lymph vessels for 4-6 years. The adult worms breed other thread-like worms (microfilariae) that again can be transferred to another person by mosquito bites.

The filariasis worm has three distinct stages of development during a lifetime, namely: (1) **egg**, (2) **larva**, and (3) **worm**.

Egg: The microfilariae from an infected person will be transferred to a mosquito where it will release eggs, which will grow into larvae in 7-21 days.

Larva: The larvae migrate to the mosquitoes' mouth parts (proboscis). When the mosquito carrying the larvae in its proboscis bite another person, these larvae are released into the blood stream of that person.

Worm: These microfilariae stay and multiply in the blood stream and attack the lymph nodes and lymph vessels resulting to malaise or fever (signs and symptoms of an infected person) and eventually disfigurement or enlargement of body parts.



What are the signs and symptoms of filariasis?

Among the people in endemic areas, the development of the disease may take a long time. Overt signs and symptoms are usually observed during adulthood even though the infection may have been acquired in childhood.

Physical symptoms: pain, swollen limbs and bad-smelling lesions in the skin; enlargement of the arms, legs, breasts, or vulva; difficulty in walking and mobility; damage to the lymphatic system and the kidneys.

Psychosocial symptoms: personal shame, lost/diminished economic productivity, becoming a burden to the family and community and social loss (lost or broken marriages, lost parenthood opportunities).



How can we prevent the spread of filariasis?



Protect people from the spread of the infection.

Stop the filariae infection in communities where lymphatic filariasis is declared endemic. Treatment programme involves taking a few anti-filariasis drugs by a majority of the population once a year for a minimum of 5 years to eliminate lymphatic filariasis.

Keep away from the breeding sites of mosquitoes carrying filariae.

Keep away from the breeding sites of mosquitoes carrying filariae- usually the leaves of pandanus, banana, pakil, taro (gabi), abaca and any axilled plants.

Persons who live in or travel to areas where filariasis occurs should:

Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by protecting self with mosquito repellants and wearing protective clothing and/or sleeping under mosquito nets.

Go for early diagnosis and treatment if infection is suspected.

Detect and treat the disease early.

If a person is suspected of infection, send a blood sample for examination. If found positive for filariasis, make sure the person is given appropriate treatment.

Schools and communities where filariasis is known to occur should participate in mass treatment programmes in the population and prevent cross-infection.

Help lessen suffering of persons with filariasis.

Carefully wash the infected areas using soap and water.

Practice regular exercising of limbs.

What **skills** should children learn in helping avoid getting filariasis?

Children should be able to demonstrate the following skills:

Protect self from being bitten by mosquitoes by:

- Wearing protective clothing when possible (long sleeves and pants).
- Using mosquito repellants on skin.
- Sleeping under mosquito nets.

Children should also be taught some environmental measures to help stop spread of filariasis.

- Clean possible breeding sites of mosquitoes such as water accumulating in the leaves of pandanus, banana, pakil, taro (gabi), abaca and any axilled plants.

Children should also participate in mass treatment programmes for filariasis.

- Comply with the drug regimen for filariasis.



1. Ways of protecting oneself from being bitten by mosquitoes:

Role-playing: How to protect oneself from mosquito bites

Write scenarios for pupils to demonstrate ways of protecting them from being bitten by mosquitoes. Call several children to act out the scenes you have prepared.

Process what happened during the role play. Emphasize the health message of protecting oneself from mosquito bites.

2. Ways of stopping the spread of filariasis:

Poster-making: How to stop the spread of filariasis

Ask pupils to make posters on the following themes to stop the spread of filariasis.

- Keep away from the breeding sites of mosquitoes.
- Encourage early detection and treatment of suspected infected persons.
- Participate in mass treatment programmes for filariasis.

Let each student show his/her poster and call another student to describe each poster. Highlight the key messages on how to stop the spread of filariasis.

What **attitude should children develop in preventing filariasis?**

Children should learn the value of protecting themselves from being bitten by mosquitoes, which can be infected with the parasitic worms that caused filariasis. It is also important that they appreciate the importance of early disease detection and prompt treatment in order to stop the disease from getting worse, and prevent its transmission to other persons. Lastly, they should also realize that persons with lymphatic filariasis need help and compassion and should not be shunned by the community.



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