

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2022, ISSUE 24

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Leishmaniasis

Leishmaniasis is caused by a tiny parasite called leishmania protozoa that is found in parts of the tropics, subtropics, and southern Europe.

The different forms of leishmaniasis are:

- **Cutaneous leishmaniasis** affects the skin and **mucous membranes**. Skin sores usually start at the site of the sandfly bite. In a few people, sores may develop on mucous membranes.
- **Systemic, or visceral**, leishmaniasis affects the entire body. This form occurs 2 to 8 months after a person is bitten by the sandfly. Most people do not remember having a skin sore. This form can lead to deadly complications. The parasites damage the immune system by decreasing the numbers of disease-fighting cells.

Some types (species) of Leishmania parasites also may be spread via contaminated needles (needle sharing) or blood transfusions. Congenital transmission (spread from a pregnant woman to her baby) has been reported.

Symptoms of cutaneous leishmaniasis depend on where the lesions are located and may include:

- Breathing difficulty
- Skin sores, which may become a skin ulcer that heals very slowly
- Stuffy nose, runny nose, and nosebleeds
- Swallowing difficulty
- Ulcers and wearing away (erosion) in the mouth, tongue, gums, lips, nose, and inner nose

Systemic visceral infection in children usually begins suddenly with:

- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Vomiting

Adults usually have a fever for 2 weeks to 2 months, along with symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, and appetite loss. Weakness increases as the disease gets worse.

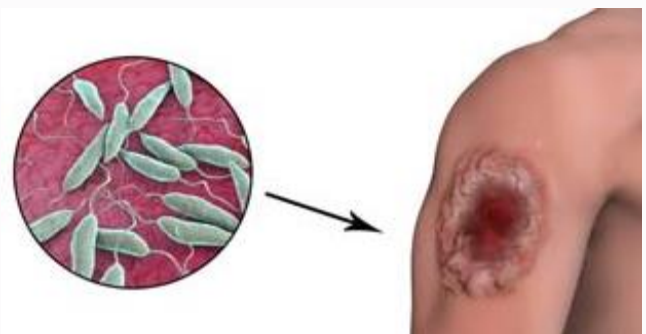
Other symptoms of systemic visceral leishmaniasis may include:

- Abdominal discomfort
- Fever that lasts for weeks; may come and go in cycles
- Night sweats
- Scaly, gray, dark, ashen skin
- Thinning hair
- Weight loss

Prognosis

Cure rates are high mostly when treatment is started before it affects the immune system. Death is usually caused by complications (deadly infections due to immune system damage), rather than from the disease itself. Death often occurs within 2 years.

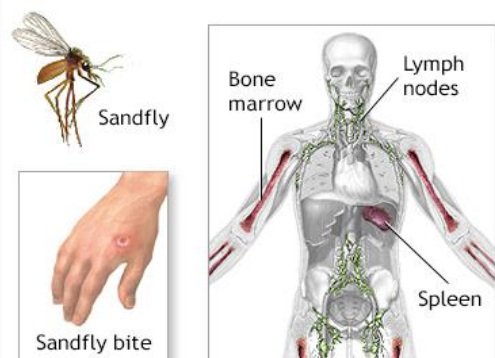
Leishmaniasis may lead to hemorrhage and disfigurement of the face.



Diagnosis and treatment

In visceral leishmaniasis, diagnosis is made by combining clinical signs with parasitological, or serological tests (such as rapid diagnostic tests). In cutaneous and mucocutaneous leishmaniasis serological tests have limited value and clinical manifestation with parasitological tests confirms the diagnosis.

The treatment of leishmaniasis depends on several factors including type of disease, concomitant pathologies, parasite species and geographic location. Leishmaniasis is a treatable and curable disease, which requires an immunocompetent system because medicines will not get rid of the parasite from the body, thus the risk of relapse if immunosuppression occurs. All patients diagnosed as with visceral leishmaniasis require prompt and complete treatment.



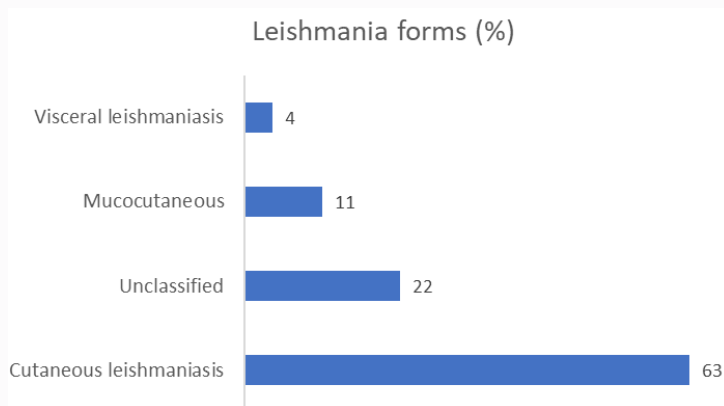
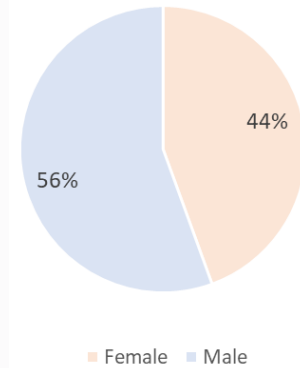
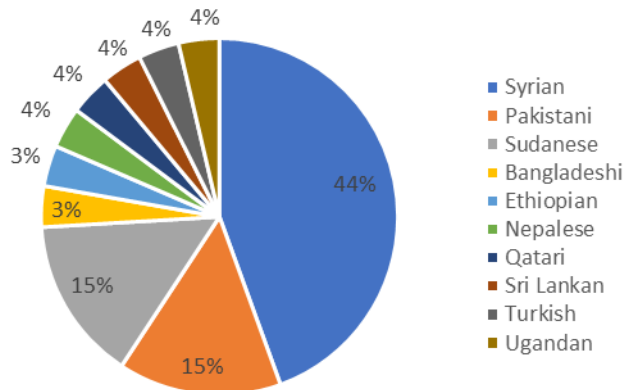
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Source:

https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/leishmaniasis/gen_info/faqs.html
<https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/diseases-conditions/leishmaniasis>

Leishmaniasis cases in HMC 2020-2021

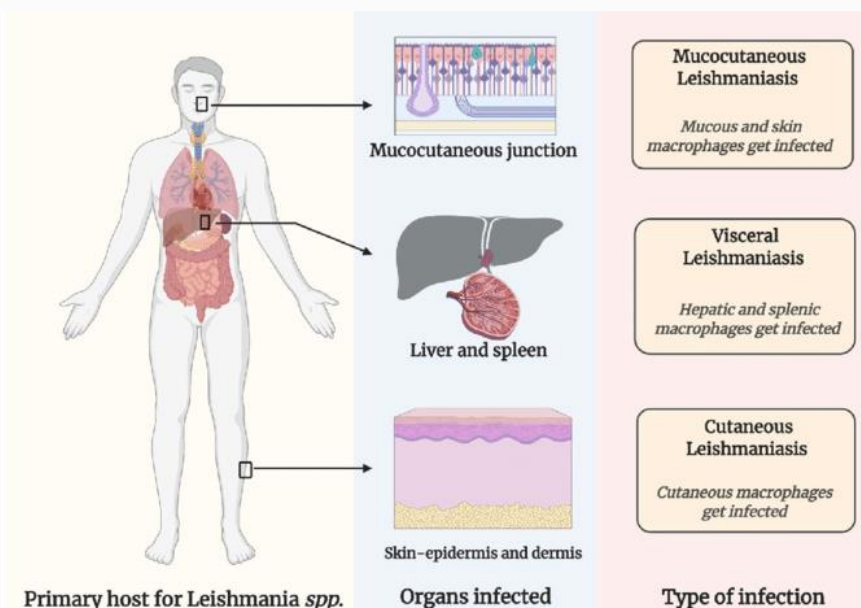
We had a total of 27 cases in 2020-2021, most probably imported. 44%(12) were from Syrian nationality, 56%(15) were Males. Age ranged between 1 and 77 years old with a mean of 30.29 and a SD of 23.30. The most encountered form was cutaneous (63%).



Key facts

- There are 3 main forms of leishmaniasis – visceral (also known as kala-azar, which is and the most serious form of the disease), cutaneous (the most common), and mucocutaneous.
- Leishmaniasis is caused by protozoan parasites which are transmitted by the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandflies.
- The disease affects some of the poorest people and is associated with malnutrition, population displacement, poor housing, a weak immune system and lack of financial resources.
- Leishmaniasis is also linked to environmental changes such as deforestation, building of dams, irrigation schemes and urbanization.
- An estimated 700 000 to 1 million new cases occur annually.
- Only a small fraction of those infected by parasites causing leishmaniasis will eventually develop the disease.
- WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region accounts for 80% of the cutaneous leishmaniasis cases worldwide. Visceral leishmaniasis is highly endemic in Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

(<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/leishmaniasis>)



Jamshaid, Humzah & Din, Fakhar Ud & Khan, Gul Majid. (2021)