



SAY NO TO





TRACHOMA..!



ISSUED BY:
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH
IN COLLABORATION WITH
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Information Brochure
FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

TRACHOMA
CONTROL PROGRAMME



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What is Trachoma?

Trachoma is a disease of the eye. It is caused by a tiny germ called *chlamydia trachomatis*. It affects the eyelid and the front of the eyeball of the eye. If it is not treated promptly it can lead to extreme discomfort and eventually to blindness.

How can you recognize trachoma?

The early stage of trachoma is called "*active trachoma*".

- Trachoma begins with red, watery eyes. There is usually a discharge from the eyes, and a feeling of sand in the eye. At this stage it can be confused with other causes of red, watery eye (usually called *Apollo* in Nigeria).

- If the early (*active*) stage is treated promptly, the eye will heal without forming scars.

The second stage of trachoma is called **trichiasis**. This means that severe scarification has taken place, leading to the inturning of the eyelid (*entropion*). The process by which this takes place is as follows:

- If the infection is not treated, after a month or more, small pinkish gray lumps, called *follicles*, form inside the upper eyelids. You can see this



Patient with Trachomatous infection follicular (TF)



Eyelashes rubbing on eyeball (TI)

when you turn back the lid.

- The whites of the eyes are reddish.
- After a few months, you may see that the top edge of the cornea of the eye looks grayish. This is because it has many tiny new blood vessels in it. These are called pannus.
- The combination of follicles and pannus usually means that the person has trachoma.
- After some years, the follicles begin to disappear, leaving whitish coloured scars. These scars make the eyelid to become thickened and may keep the lids from opening or closing completely. Sometimes the scarring pulls the eyelashes down into the eye, scratching the cornea and causing blindness.
- If rubbing of the eyeball by eye lashes (*trichiasis*) is not treated, it leads to permanent blindness.

How do you catch trachoma? How is it spread?



Prolonged rubbing of the eyeball by eyelashes causes "Corneal Opacity" (CO)



Trachoma is spread by various means:

Flies spread trachoma. Flies multiply in dirty environments. They breed on heaps of rubbish or garbage, on faeces deposited indiscriminately around village settlements, or on the dung associated with keeping of domestic animals in living quarters. The more flies there are in a community, the easier and faster trachoma can spread. The flies pick up the infection from the discharge from trachoma-infected eyes. After picking up the infection, they spread it to uninfected persons causing them to become infected too.

Hands and fingers spread trachoma. Fingers which are used to wipe an infected eye can accidentally touch an uninfected eye and transmit the infection to the healthy eye. Children can do this when wiping their eyes, or mothers can do this when wiping the eyes of their children. Children can also spread the infection to their mothers in this way.

Objects can also spread trachoma. When infected persons share objects like eye pencils, handkerchiefs, towels, facecloths, etc. with uninfected persons, the healthy person can catch the infection when these objects come into



The flies pick up the infection and spread it to unaffected persons



Mother using same hand to clean many kids' faces



Mother using same eye pencil on many children

contact with his/her eyes.

Prevention of trachoma

You can prevent Trachoma by keeping your:

1) Environment neat through:

- Disposing your waste in designated places, and burning or burying them from time to time.
- Use latrine to pass stool, rather than passing it indiscriminately in the open space.
- Keep latrines always clean after use.
- Burying of your faeces

If you take the above measures, you will eliminate breeding sites of flies. Flies as we saw above are very important in transmitting Trachoma.

2) Yourself and your children's faces clean:-

- Wash your children's faces at least two times in a day.
- You do not need plenty water to do this.
- Wash your hands in-between cleaning of children faces, so that you do not carry infection from one child to

another.

- Once your child's face is clean, flies will not be attracted to it, talk more of carrying infection from it to another child.

Treatment of trachoma

Trachoma can be easily treated, especially in its early (active) stage, provided the required drugs are used regularly as directed.

Tetracycline eye ointment is applied to the eye twice a day for 6 weeks. This will cure active trachoma.

For cases of advanced trachoma with trichiasis, free surgery is available to repair the damage to the eye lid and stop lashes from touching the eyeball. There will be no need for people to keep local epilation forceps for removal of intumed eyelashes.

Roles of Community Volunteers/Mothers

- Community volunteers/mothers will register each household before beginning health education.
- Community volunteers/mothers will be trained on basic health education messages.



*Person applying
Tetracycline (TCN)*

- They will mobilize the community, using community leaders, religious leaders, school headmasters/headmistresses and various community organizations. Mobilization will involve education about the nature of the disease, how it can be prevented, and the medication used to cure it.
- The Community volunteers/mothers should also educate the community members on misconceptions about trachoma. They should inform people that trachoma cannot be caused by staring at an infected person, neither is it hereditary. Intimate contact does not cause trachoma, but encourages transmission.
- They will supervise the proper use and maintenance of latrines.
- The Community volunteers will monitor and refer cases of people with eye lashes touching the eyeball to the nearest clinic.
- The Community volunteers will compile reports and send them to the District Health Supervisor, or to the clinics.
- The Community volunteers should educate family members and monitor

community leaders, religious leaders, school headmasters/headmistresses and various community organizations. Mobilization will involve education about the nature of the disease, how it can be prevented, and the medication used to cure it.

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- The Community volunteers should educate family members and monitor them to ensure they wash children's



The fly is the chief agent of transmission of Trachoma



Child's face with discharge



Mother washing child's face



faces regularly.

Key Health Education Messages about Trachoma for General Audience

- Trachoma is caused by a germ.
- Trachoma is transmitted by flies, fingers and sharing of cloth materials.
- Transmission of the disease is encouraged by poor personal and environmental hygiene. A clean environment and personal cleanliness can help prevent trachoma.
- Eliminating breeding sites for flies will reduce the incidence of the disease.
- Mothers should make sure children's faces are always clean to prevent trachoma.
- It is a misconception that trachoma is caused by staring at the face of an infected person. It is also not hereditary.
- Similarly, the following do not cause trachoma:
 - Dust
 - Same blood group
 - Too much reading
 - Farming



Refuse dump



Tetracycline eye ointment tube (TCO)

