

## Content

- Introduction
- Acute Flaccid Paralysis
- Acute Watery Diarrhea
- Cholera
- Diarrhea with blood
- Malaria
- Measles
- Meningitis
- Neonatal Tetanus
- Pneumonia
- Tuberculosis
- Viral Hemorrhagic Fever
- Yellow Fever
- Ebola Virus Disease
- Lassa Fever
- Rabies
- Maternal Death
- Neonatal Death

## Introduction

The Ministry of health with support from partners has strengthened its early warning and response system to detect and respond to future outbreaks a core component of the investment plan for building a resilient health system. Key to this is public awareness on the priority diseases and how to recognize them and report promptly. Dissemination of this information through the media is important due to the reach and trust people have in the media. It is against this background that the Ministry of Health with support from World Health Organization has developed this media kit which will enable health reporters, journalists to know more about these diseases and conditions. It is our hope that this tool will be used as reference to enhance dissemination of the content in appropriate formats and shared through the media on a regular basis to different audiences.

## Acute Flaccid Paralysis



Acute Flaccid Paralysis is a sickness that comes with a sudden onset of weakness or paralysis in one or both legs or arms or makes a patient aged less than 15 years unable to walk. This abnormal condition may be caused by sickness or by trauma affecting the nerves associated with the involved muscles.

### Key messages:

- Communities should be informed that any child or person with sudden weakness in one or both legs or arms with fever should be reported to the nearest health facility for proper investigation and management.
- All children should be immunized against Polio before they reach one year old.

## Diarrheal diseases



Diarrheal diseases are illnesses that make a person have a running stomach/pass watery or loose pu-pu. These diseases make the body lose water very fast

Diarrheal diseases are caused by germs. A person gets diarrhea through poor hygiene which allows germs to enter a person's stomach. The following are some of the ways a person can get these germs:

- Drinking water that is collected from contaminated water sources or kept in dirty containers
- Eating food that is cooked, served or kept in dirty pots, pans and plates
- Eating food which is not properly cooked (under-cooked)
- Touching pu-pu or vomit of a sick person with bare hands and eating later without washing the hands
- Eating food that has gone bad (spoil)
- Eating food without washing hands with soap and clean water
- Drinking juices or local brews made using contaminated water.
- Eating cold food sold by the road side

## Acute Watery diarrhea



Any person with 3 or more loose pu-pu/running stomach within the last 24 hours.

Key messages:

- If a person or child has these signs of dehydration or other problems, he/she take them to the nearest health facility quick-quick.
- When a person has running stomach give him/her plenty clean water and oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) or coconut water, and tay-tay water for children to prevent dehydration.
- Continue feeding and or breastfeeding.

## Cholera

Cholera is an acute illness that results in excessive watery diarrhea. It is a dangerous disease that can lead to death shortly after infection. The disease is mostly common during the rainy seasons and in communities with poor sanitation and hygiene.

A person suffering from Cholera develops the following:

- Frequent passing of 3 or more rice water-like pu-pu in 24 hours.
- Vomiting.
- General body weakness due to excessive loss of water.
- Feeling thirsty and stops urinating due to reduced body fluids.

Cholera is preventable and yet has continued to affect many people in Liberia.

### Key messages:

- If any person is passing frequent watery pu-pu and vomiting, give him/her Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) or home-made juice when they pass stool or vomit.
- If anyone has signs of cholera don't waste time take him/her quick-quick to the health facility for laboratory testing and treatment.
- Sprinkle germ-killing solutions like clorax or Dettol on the pu-pu and vomit of the sick person
- Ensure that everyone uses the toilet or latrine and keep the toilets and latrines clean and covered.
- Wash hands well with soap and clean water before touching or preparing, handling and eating food as well as after using the toilet or latrine.
- Add clorax or Dettol to the water you use to clean the latrines and toilets.
- All water people drink should be boiled or treated water guard and store it in clean covered containers.
- Ensure that food is properly covered and stored.
- Avoid eating cold foods (especially those that are sold along roadsides or dirty eating places).

---

## Diarrhea with blood



This refers to any diarrheal episode in which the loose or watery pu-pu contains visible red blood. Bloody diarrhea may also be referred to as dysentery, which is usually caused by a bacterial infection.

Key messages:

- Any person passing bloody pu-pu or slimy (slippery) pu-pu with stomach pain should be reported to the health facility for laboratory testing and treatment.

---

## Malaria



Malaria is a disease that can be spread through mosquito bites. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water and tall grass around the house.

Young children and big belly women are in the most danger from malaria. The signs of malaria are: high fever, shaking; sweating; headache; vomiting and diarrhea

Key messages:

- Sleep under a treated mosquito net every night to protect you and your family against mosquito's bites.
- In case of any fever, go quick-quick to the nearest clinic.
- Everyone should use the net, but it is especially important for big belly women and children under 5 years old.
- It is important for big belly women to go for big belly visits at least 4 times. At the visit she will be given medicine and a net to protect against malaria.
- Drain stagnant water around your homes and community to prevent mosquitoes breeding there.
- Keep the areas around your house clean without too much grass to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

## Measles



Measles is in Liberia plenty and is very easy to spread. Measles is a sickness that can be spread through the air from coughing and sneezing from someone who has measles.

Measles is a sickness that can put small bumps on the child's skin, makes the child's skin hot and the eyes red.

Measles can cause blindness and death if not treated soon.

### Key messages:

- All children in the community must be immunized against measles.
- If a child has signs of measles, take him/her to the clinic quick-quick for treatment.
- Immunization is free and effective. All children should take the measles vaccine at the clinic at 9 months of age to protect them against measles.
- A child can also take measles vaccine, during measles campaign.
- The vaccine is free and safe.

## Meningitis



Meningitis is an infection of the membrane and fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. It is caused by germs and can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss, or learning disability.

One can get meningitis through breathing in (inhaling) droplets from the nose or throat of an infected person.

A person suffering from meningitis will have sudden onset of fever and any of the following: headache, stiff neck or vomiting

In children below 5 years, fever, headache, and neck stiffness may be absent or difficult to detect. A child with meningococcal meningitis will have the following major signs; slow or inactive; irritable; vomiting; poor appetite; and bulging of the soft part of the head (Fontanelle).

### Key messages:

- Meningitis is a very serious disease that affects all age groups but can be treated and prevented
- Overcrowded places and poorly ventilated houses promote the spread of the disease
- Vaccination protects and reduces the risk of contracting the disease
- Anyone who is suspected to have contracted meningitis must receive treatment immediately to avoid complications and death
- Community leaders should mobilize communities to respond to the prevention of the meningitis epidemic
- Those who have been in close contact with a person suffering from meningitis are at risk of contracting the disease. They must report to the nearest health unit for proper advice quick-quick.
- Meningitis can easily spread and affect many people at one time. Follow the advice given by health workers to prevent the disease and unnecessary death.

## Neonatal Tetanus



Tetanus (jerking sickness) is a disease caused by germs which enter the body through a wound or wet umbilical stump. It causes severe pain and stiffness, starting from the jaw and spreading to the whole body.

It affects both new born babies and adults. Any newborn who is normal at birth, and then after 2 days is unable to suck or feed or jerking should be taken to the nearest health facility for proper medical investigations and treatment.

A new born baby can get Tetanus if:

- Delivered in a dirty environment; The umbilical cord has been cut with a contaminated instrument which has not been sterilized or boiled and kept clean; The umbilical cord is tied with a contaminated string/thread; The umbilical cord is smeared with animal dung, ash, sailor lizard droppings.

Children and adults can get tetanus when the germ enters their bodies through:

- Deep cuts or wounds; wounds caused by nails, thorns and other unclean sharp objects; injuries caused by barbed wire; and animal bite wounds.

### Key messages:

- Tetanus is a killer disease but can be prevented through immunization.
- All new born babies must be immunized at birth, 6, 10, 14 weeks and 9 months of age and complete all doses to protect them fully against tetanus.
- The instruments for cutting the newborn baby's umbilical cord must be clean and sterilized.
- The umbilical cord must be kept clean and dry as advised by the health workers.
- Every woman of child bearing age (13-49 years) should complete the 5 doses of tetanus vaccination to protect herself and the unborn baby from tetanus.

## Pneumonia



Pneumonia is a disease which results from the infection of the air passages and lungs by germs. It causes difficulty in breathing and may lead to death within 3-4 days, if not treated. It attacks mostly children under 5 years of age, but adults can also be affected. Any child less than 5 years of age with cough or fast breathing or noisy chest should be taken to the health facility for treatment quick-quick.

### Key messages:

- Keep the child warm and in a clean environment.
- If a child is breathing faster than normal, this could be pneumonia. Take the child to the nearest health facility immediately.
- Remember Pneumonia kills if not treated quickly. Protect your child against pneumonia by ensuring he/she is fully immunized

## Tuberculosis



Tuberculosis (TB) is a bad-bad sickness caused by a germ. It makes someone cough for a long time, get weak, lose weight and become thinner. Tuberculosis is one of the common killer diseases among adults in Liberia today.

Tuberculosis spreads through the air by a person who is sick with the disease. When a person suffering from tuberculosis coughs, he/she spreads the TB germs in the air. If people around him/her breathe in the air with the germs, they can get the disease if their bodies are not able to fight the germs. It usually attacks the lungs though other organs of the body may be affected.

Therefore tuberculosis is caused by breathing in air that is contaminated with germs that cause the disease.

When someone is suffering from tuberculosis he/she experiences the following:

- coughing all the time for more than three weeks;
- coughing out sputum (mucus from the lungs)
- sometimes coughing out blood stained spit

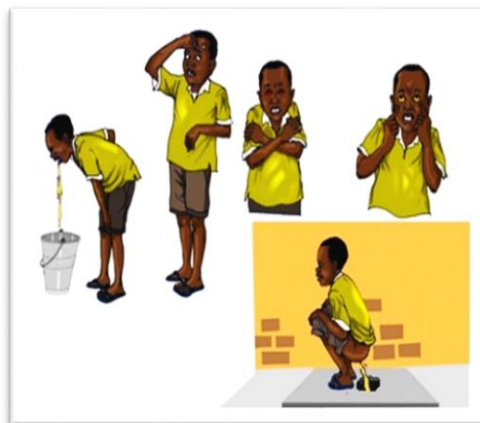


- chest pain
- difficulty in breathing sometimes
- progressive loss of weight (getting thinner and thinner over time)
- mild fever during the day
- sweating at night
- Poor appetite.

Key messages:

- Anyone with signs of TB should go to the nearest health facility sooner for proper examination and treatment. The treatment takes six to eight months.
- He/she should continue to take all medicines given by the health worker until told that he/she is completely cured.
- People with tuberculosis must be treated quickly. Curing them is the best way of preventing the disease from spreading and eliminating the source of infection.
- All children must be given BCG vaccination against tuberculosis at birth or soon after to prevent the severe forms of TB.
- A person with tuberculosis should: always cover his/her mouth when coughing; spit in containers with a cover and dispose the spittle in a latrine; eat plenty of good food (nutritious) and have a lot of rest and enough sleep
- Living in well ventilated and lit houses.

## Viral hemorrhagic fever



Viral hemorrhagic fevers (VHFs) refer to a group of illnesses (Ebola, Marburg, Lassa fever or Yellow fever) that are caused by several distinct families of viruses.

All types of VHF are characterized by fever and bleeding disorders and all can progress to high fever, shock and death in many cases. Some of the VHF agents cause relatively mild illnesses, while others, such as Ebola virus, can cause severe, life-threatening disease.

Laboratory investigation usually confirm the type of infection.

Key messages:

- If any person who has fever and two or more other symptoms (Headaches, Vomiting; runny stomach; weakness); or who died after severe fever and bleeding call 4455 quick-quick and tell the community leader.

## Yellow Fever



Yellow fever is an acute viral hemorrhagic disease transmitted by infected mosquitoes. The "yellow" in the name refers to the yellowing of the eyes, skin, or mucous membranes.

Once contracted, the yellow fever virus incubates in the body for 3 to 6 days. Many people do not experience symptoms, but when these do occur, the most common are fever, muscle pain with prominent backache, headache, loss of appetite, and nausea or vomiting. In most cases, symptoms disappear after 3 to 4 days.

Complications develop in 15% of infected persons; these complications are jaundice, abdominal pain, bleeding and kidney damage. Half of those who develop complications die. There is no treatment for Yellow Fever. Immunization is the best form of protection from Yellow Fever.

### Key messages:

- Any person who has fever with any two or more symptoms (vomiting, yellow eyes, weak in the body, headache or body pain) must be reported and taken to the health facility for more investigations and management immediately.
- The Yellow Fever vaccine is very effective. It provides protection against the disease after one week, and immunized persons are protected for life.

## Ebola Virus Disease



Ebola is a bad-bad disease that is spread through the body fluids of a person who is sick or who has died from Ebola. The signs and symptoms of Ebola are fever that starts quick-quick and two or more symptoms (headache; vomiting; runny stomach; weakness; body pain; sore throat; skin rash; red eyes and or bleeding from the nose or mouth).

### Key messages:

- Protect yourself by washing your hands often with soap and clean water.
- Keep a distance from sick people suspected to be having signs of Ebola. Do not touch their belongings or their body fluids.
- Call 4455 for help and tell your community leader if your relative develops signs and symptoms of Ebola.

## Maternal Death

Maternal death is when a big belly woman dies due to complications of big belly or childbirth or deaths which occur within six weeks (42 days) of childbirth or removal of a big belly. In Liberia, about 1,072 deaths per 100,000 live births occur as a result of complications of big belly or childbirth each year.

Some of the direct causes of maternal deaths are:

- Too much bleeding during pregnancy
- Infection of the birth passage and of the blood, following delivery or abortion.
- Fits (convulsions) due to pregnancy induced by high blood pressure.
- Obstructed labor due to the birth passage being too small for the baby to pass
- Ruptured uterus resulting into excessive bleeding
- Unsafe abortion, usually resulting in too much bleeding, the piercing of the womb or through infections.



The indirect causes of maternal deaths usually result from previously existing diseases or diseases occurring during pregnancy. They include: Malaria; Little blood (anemia); HIV/AIDS; Liver disease such as hepatitis B which causes yellow eyes; too much sugar in the blood (diabetes); and Heart disease.

### Key messages:

- All big belly women should go for big belly visits at least four times to the health facility starting as soon as she is big belly. They check-ups are important to learn about her health and how baby is growing.
- Girls should be encouraged to stay in school in order to delay the age of first pregnancy to at least 18 years.
- Women are advised to have babies only when they are between the ages of 18 and 35 years.
- Women should use family planning method to enable them space at least three years between one pregnancy and the next.
- Any woman who has had an operation during childbirth must have her next deliveries in a hospital which has emergency care services.

## Neonatal death



Neonatal death is when a baby dies at birth or within the first 28 days (4 weeks) of life. The common causes of neonatal death are:

Infections which includes sepsis, pneumonia, tetanus and diarrhea.

Pre-term (babies born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed),

Birth asphyxia (lack of oxygen to a newborn at birth).

### Key messages:

- The baby should start breast-feeding sooner after delivery.
- Up to two thirds of newborn deaths can be prevented if known, effective health measures are provided at birth and during the first week of life.
- Kangaroo mother care (the baby is carried by the mother with skin-to-skin contact and frequent breastfeeding)
- Proper treatment of newborn infections.
- Skilled health care during pregnancy, childbirth and in the postnatal (immediately following birth) period prevents complications for mother and newborn, and allows for early detection and management of problems.
- Home visits by a skilled health worker/Community health volunteers immediately after birth is a health strategy that can increase newborn survival.

## Lassa fever



Lassa fever is a sickness which is among us and has killed plenty people. You can catch this sickness from rats that play in your food and drinking water leaving it contaminated with their pee-pee and pu-pu.

It can also be spread through contact with people who are sick with the disease or their body fluids.

### Signs of Lassa fever

The signs and symptoms of Lassa fever are high fever, pain in the chest, back and stomach, cough, vomiting and running stomach. If you see any of these signs and symptoms you should tell your community leaders or gCHVs to report to the clinic quick-quick.

Lassa fever is serious, especially for big belly women.

### Key Messages:

It is important to keep our homes, surrounding and our communities clean to protect against rats that carry the virus.

- Dispose of garbage correctly and away from the home
- Cover your food and drinking water good to stop rats from playing in your food and water
- Do not dry food in open places where rats can reach
- Do not eat rats because you can get the sickness by coming in contact with the blood, pee-pee or pu-pu from the rats.
- If you see people with the signs of Lassa Fever, do not touch them, call 4455, and tell your community leaders or gCHVs to tell the health people.

## Rabies

Rabies is a very bad-bad disease transmitted by a bite or scratch from a sick dog, cat, bat or monkey.



Animal bites and scratches can cause bad sickness.

In Liberia, some animals carry Rabies which can be very serious and deadly to people.

Don't go near and don't touch stray dogs and cats or wild animals, even ones that look friendly.

### Key Message:

- In case of a bite or scratch from a dog or from a wild animal, do not wait!
- Wash the wound with soap and clean water and go quick-quick to the closest clinic or hospital

## Vaccination

**TAKE YOUR BABY TO THE CLINIC  
FOR VACCINES 5 TIMES BEFORE  
THEY REACH 1 YEAR OLD**



**DON'T WAIT!**

**YOUR BABY'S PROTECTION IS IN YOUR HANDS**

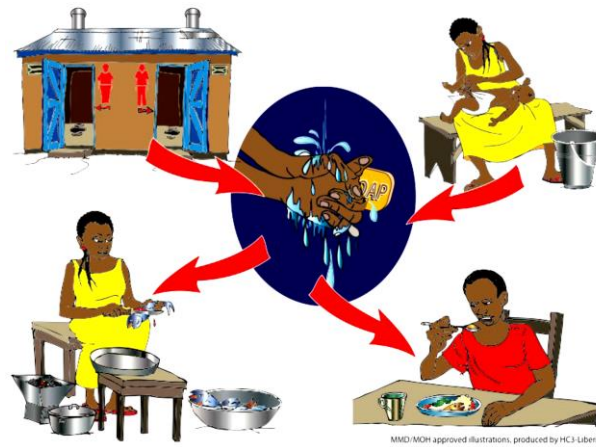
Different vaccines are given to children under 1 year old and big belly at all clinics and hospitals. The vaccines help give our children a healthy start in life. They save lives, and protect from plenty sicknesses like:

- Polio (crippling)
- TB (cough with blood)
- Measles (spot-spot on the skin)
- Pneumonia (deep cold on the side and chest)
- Tetanus (neonatal tetanus)
- Yellow fever
- Whooping cough

They also give 1 vaccine to big belly women and women that can born to protect against tetanus (stiffness/jerking).

Take your baby to the clinic for vaccines 5 times before they reach 1 year old.

# Handwashing



Washing hands can prevent

Plenty sickness like:

- Ebola
- Running stomach
- Typhoid
- Cholera
- Dysentery

What are the important times for washing hands?

- Before preparing food
- Before eating food
- After using the latrine or after coming from the bush
- After changing baby diaper or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet

# **Liberia Media Kit on Priority Diseases and Conditions**

## **Know the Facts**

