

INFORMATION SHEET FOR DRUG DISTRIBUTORS

(ALBENDAZOLE AND IVERMECTIN)

PROGRAMME TO ELIMINATE LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS (PELF) – WHO/CDS/CPE/CEE/2004.44

THE DRUGS

The Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis recommends the use of two drugs that are administered once a year in the form of tablets. The two drugs are:

- albendazole and
- ivermectin.

Everyone in the endemic area you are going to cover should take both drugs together once a year. The only people who should not take the drugs are:

- seriously ill people,
- children less than 90 cm in height (from 3 to 5 years of age),
- pregnant women and lactating women within 1 week of giving birth (who are excluded only as a precaution, since there is no evidence of complications resulting from taking these drugs).

Everyone else in the remaining eligible population should swallow:

- one tablet of **albendazole**, and
- a number of **ivermectin** tablets based on height as shown in the table below.

HEIGHT (cm)	DOSE (number of ivermectin tablets)
90 to 119	1 (one)
120 to 140	2 (two)
141 to 158	3 (three)
more than 158	4 (four)

The person administering the tablets must always supervise the swallowing.

ADVERSE DRUG EXPERIENCES

Some people may have adverse experiences as a result of taking the tablets, but these are usually mild, disappear on their own and show that the tablets are working (the discomfort is caused by the worms dying). It is very important that you inform the community about the likelihood of these experiences. Usually the experiences occur soon after swallowing the tablets (within 5–7 days), and do not last for more than 3 days. The most common experiences in decreasing order of frequency are:

- headache
- dizziness
- nausea
- muscular aches
- decreased appetite
- scrotal swelling
- fever
- malaise
- red streaks on the body

You should be able to reassure people with mild adverse experiences. In the rare case of a more severe experience, which is usually due to a high level of infection, refer the person to the designated treatment facility. The national programme has ensured that health facilities will remain open during the period of the drug administration campaign.

When you first meet the community leaders, be pleasant and cheerful – smile and avoid appearing arrogant in any way. Provide them with a clear and concise overview of the programme. Explain that the tablets are free, that all eligible people must swallow them and that by so doing they will benefit themselves and the community. Key points for communication are given overleaf.

KEY POINTS ON COMMUNICATION

YOUR APPROACH

1. Be convincing and persuasive when talking to people.
2. Be confident and enthusiastic.
3. Recount success stories, explaining the benefits of the programme.
4. Explain that the success of the programme depends on everyone in the community taking the tablets.
5. Listen carefully and respond sympathetically.

MAIN MESSAGES

- This is a big health problem in the area. Everyone in the area risks catching filariasis.
- The government is committed to eliminating the disease, along with other countries in the world. The drugs are given free by the World Health Organization and its partners.
- The very tiny worms are transmitted from one infected person to another by mosquitoes.
- The worms can live and grow inside a person for years without that person looking or feeling ill.
- Because a person who has worms in the body may still look healthy, we must ensure that everyone swallows the tablets to eliminate the risk of becoming infected.
- Once a person has the disease there is no cure, but drugs can prevent infection.
- Health workers, known as filaria prevention assistants, will come to every home and give everyone between 2 and 5 tablets.
- Everyone must take the tablets, except lactating women within 1 week of giving birth, pregnant women, children less than 90 cm in height (from 3 to 5 years of age), and seriously ill people.
- Some people will have mild adverse experiences such as headache, nausea, or a slight rise in temperature, but these are temporary and will go away in a few days. Usually, this means that the tablets are being effective and killing the worms.
- Good care and hygiene will help those who already suffer from chronic filariasis.
- Everyone must join in the campaign to help protect others from this horrible disease.
- Let's join the campaign to fight this disease.

1st VISIT

- Introduce yourself. If the programme has provided an identity badge or card, show it.
- Be professional and efficient in your approach, without being arrogant.
- Inform people about the programme – keep explanations simple. Emphasize its benefits and why everyone needs to participate.
- Encourage people to hold the leaflets and the sample tablets in their hands.
- Explain the risk of possible adverse experiences in few cases after taking the tablets.
- Fill in the household registration booklet. Register everyone living in the household, not only those who are eligible to receive the tablets or are present at that time.

2nd VISIT

- Reinforce the main messages and repeat the reasoning behind the programme.
- Emphasize once more the benefits to each individual and household.
- Answer questions or concerns. Identify problem areas or individual concerns.
- Show the tablets and persuade people to hold them in their hands.
- Ask for their participation and support; encourage them to inform others in the community about the tablet distribution.
- Distribute registration cards.
- Distribute promotional materials.
- Reinforce the messages on possible adverse experiences.

3rd VISIT

DISTRIBUTION OF THE DRUGS

- Watch while all eligible household members swallow their tablets; record the swallowing.
- Do not entrust people with tablets to give to others. Do not leave tablets behind.
- Register the names of everyone who swallowed the tablets.
- Reinforce the messages on possible adverse experiences.
- Explain how you or the health centre can be contacted.
- Show support by congratulating people on their participation.

FOLLOW-UP VISIT

- Ensure that anyone who did not take the tablets on distribution day swallows them now.
- Register the names of everyone who swallowed the tablets on this visit.

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