Human Diseases and Rice

Rice Science for a Better World

rice fact sheets

What are the most prevalent health problems in rice-based communities and what can you do?

This fact sheet is to raise awareness about some of the major health problems experienced in rice-based communities. It should not be considered a substitute for seeking professional medical care and advice.

Problem/Disease	What can I do to help prevent it?
Arsenic toxicity: A major cause of both chronic and acute poisoning.	In areas with high levels of arsenic in water or soil, you should use cleaner sources of water and limit contact with soil.
Cholera: Causes a copious, painless, watery diarrhea that can quickly lead to severe dehydration and death if treatment is not promptly given.	Avoid untreated water and poorly cooked or raw seafood in endemic areas. A vaccine is available, but its benefit is uncertain.
Dengue: Severe, flu-like illness spread by mosquitoes.	Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes especially at dawn and dusk when Dengue mosquitoes are most active. Wear clothing that covers the arms and legs, apply insect repellent to both skin and clothing. No vaccine is presently available.
Hepatitis B: A serious viral disease that attacks the liver. Chronically infected persons are at high risk of death from cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.	Avoid activities that result in exchange of blood or blood-derived fluids, or sexual activity. Risk is reduced by vaccination.
HIV/Aids: Causes progressive damage to the immune system.	Avoid sexual intercourse, needle- or syringe-sharing, or blood, blood components, or organ or tissue transplantation from infected people. It passes perinatally from an infected woman to her infant. There is presently no vaccine.
Influenza: A viral disease characterized by sudden onset of high fever, headache and severe malaise, non-productive cough, sore throat, and rhinitis.	Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Reduce spread by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands often and try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after exposure. A vaccine which and must be received each year is available.
Malaria: Causes extreme exhaustion associated with paroxysms of high fever, sweating, shaking chills, and anemia.	Use appropriate drugs and personal protection measures (e.g., clothing that covers the arms and legs, insect repellent on both skin and clothing). Regardless of methods employed, malaria may still be contracted. There is presently no vaccine.
Schistosomiasis: a parasitic disease spread by snails leading to chronic ill health.	Reduce contact with contaminated water. There is presently no vaccine.
Tuberculosis: A contagious respiratory disease.	Transmission is by the airborne route, person to person by sneezes and coughs, and is most likely in crowded settings. The BCG vaccine is used in most developing countries to reduce the severe consequences of tuberculosis in children.
Typhoid: Intestinal tract and bloodstream causing sustained fever, malaise, etc.	Reduce exposure to potentially contaminated food and drink. A vaccination does exist, but is only about 70% effective.
Vitamin A deficiency Blindness: The leading cause of preventable blindness in children	Eat foods rich in vitamin A and/or carotenes such as apricots, mangos, broccoli and carrots, etc..

For more information on rice, visit the Rice Knowledge bank at: http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org
To diagnose problems in the field visit http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/ricedoctor.
This material has been drawn from Mackill University: http://sprojects.mmi.mcgill.ca/tropmed/WHO web site: http://www.who.int/en/The Center for Disease control (CDC) http://www.cdc.gov

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