

Community home-based prevention of disability due to lymphatic filariasis



Wash your leg, or other part of the body affected by lymphoedema, with soap and clean water

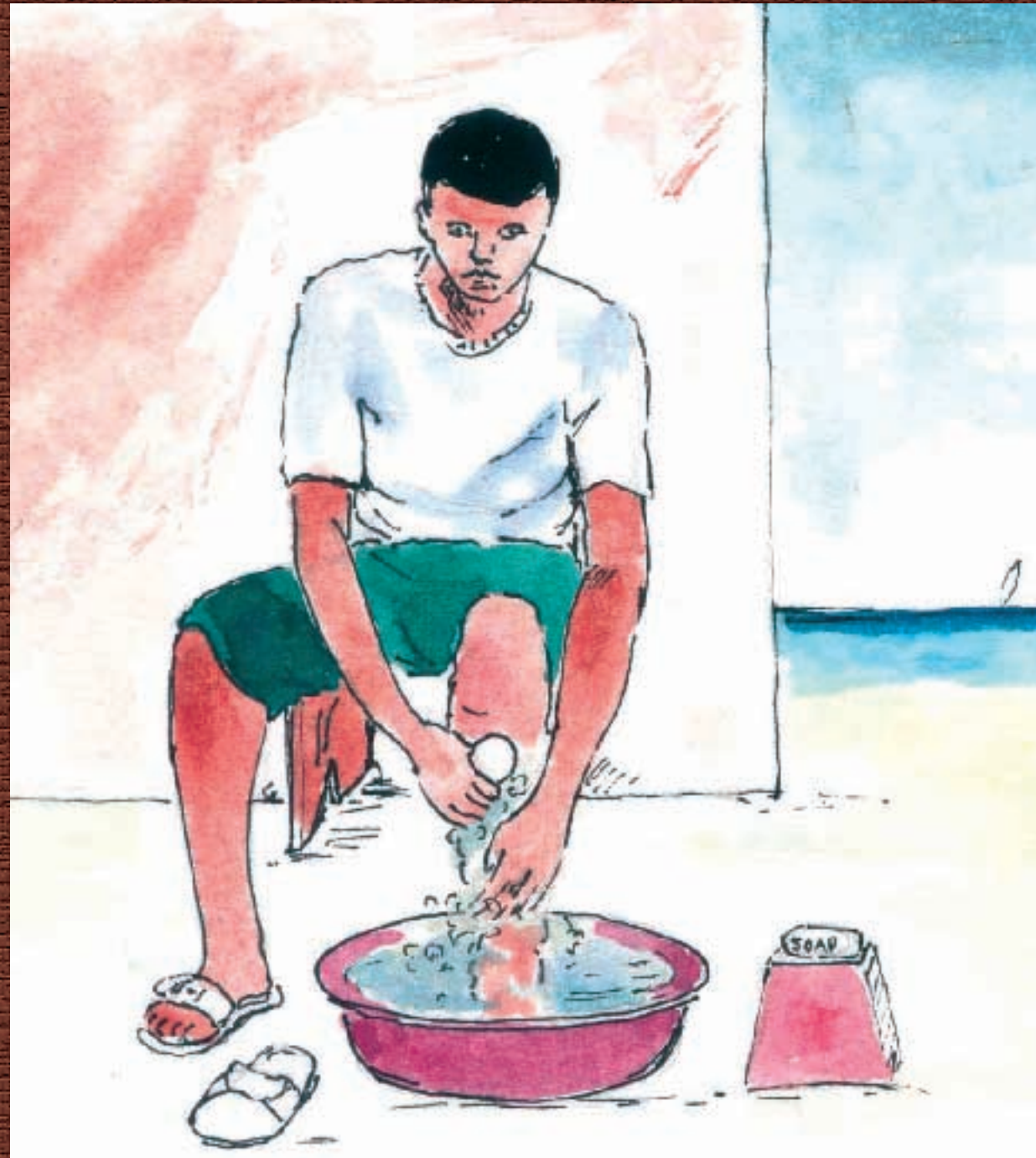


Figure 1

When your leg or another part of your body is swollen, there are some simple measures you can take to avoid further swelling and pain.

These measures will also help you to walk more easily, to be able to work and to participate in social and religious activities.

The first step is to carefully wash the limb with soap and clean, room-temperature water and to look for small wounds, blisters, minor cuts, scratches, etc. (Figure 1).



Man washing his leg with soap and water

Wash your leg, or other part of the body affected by lymphoedema, with soap and clean water



Figure 2

You can wash your leg by yourself but you might need the help of a relative, parent or friend to clean places that are difficult for you to reach (Figures 2 and 3).

The person helping you does not risk catching the disease because LF is transmitted only by mosquitoes.



Figure 3

The man is washing his swollen leg with soap and clean water. The woman is being helped to wash.

The leg and the foot are washed gently, including in between the toes and folds, using a clean cloth.

Washing the leg is important to protect the skin from infection.



Man being taught how to clean between the folds



Woman being helped to wash her leg

Dry your leg, or other part of the body affected by lymphoedema, carefully and gently



Figure 4

It is very important that you dry your leg and foot gently to avoid damaging the skin (Figure 4).



Man drying his leg

Dry your leg, or other part of the body affected by lymphoedema, carefully and gently



Figure 5

You should use a clean cloth and pay extra attention to drying carefully in between the toes and folds (Figures 5 and 6).

If it is difficult for you to reach your leg or foot, ask a relative or friend to help you.

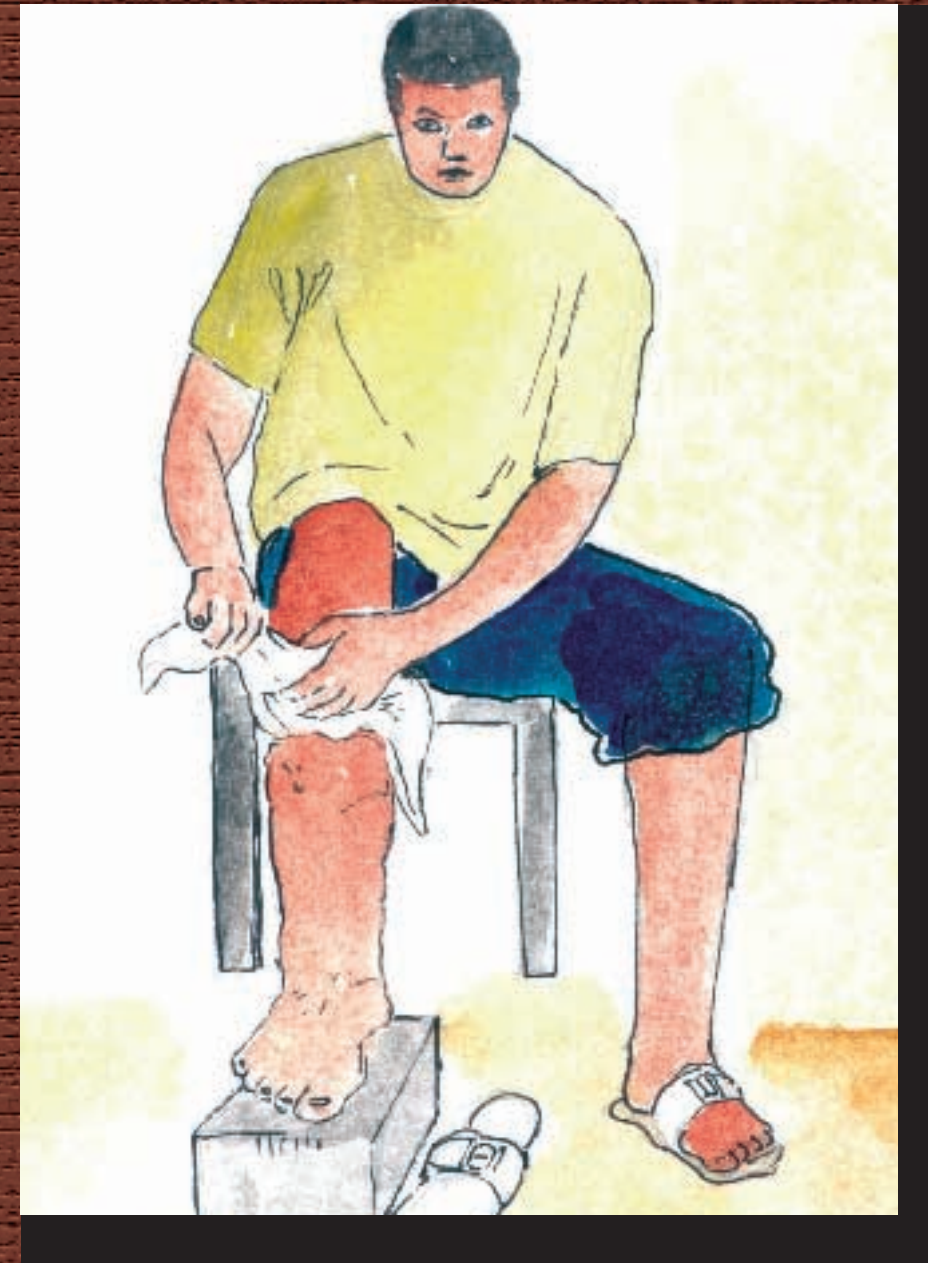
The man is carefully and gently drying his swollen leg with a clean cloth, taking extra care in between the toes and folds.



Figure 6



**Man drying between
the toes**



**Man drying between
the folds**

Elevate your leg during the day and at night



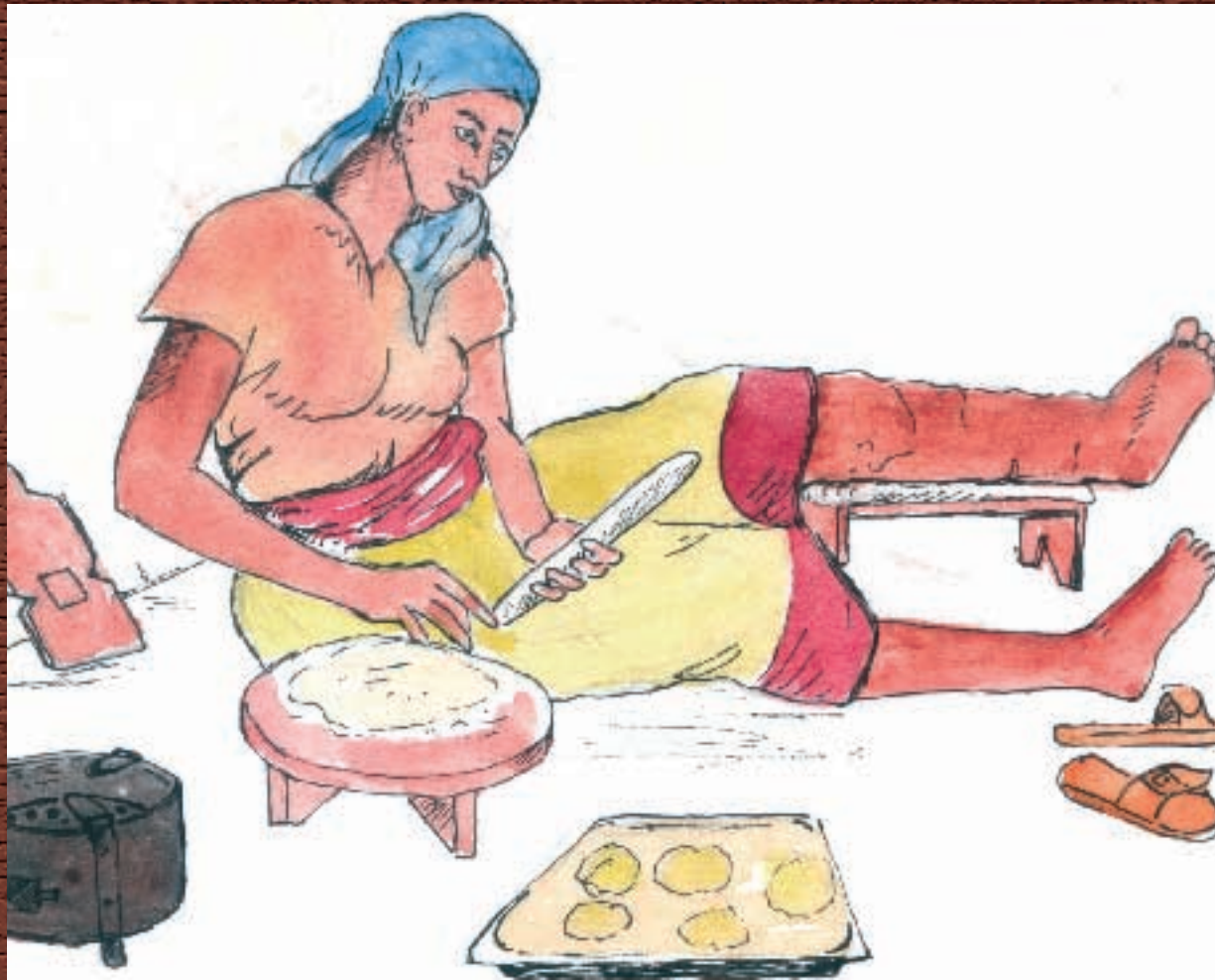
Figure 7

If your leg is swollen, make sure you raise it as much as possible.

There are many things you can continue to do while sitting with your leg raised, such as cooking (Figure 7) and working (Figure 8).



Figure 8



**Woman elevating her leg
while working**



**Man elevating his leg
while working**

Elevate your leg during the day and at night



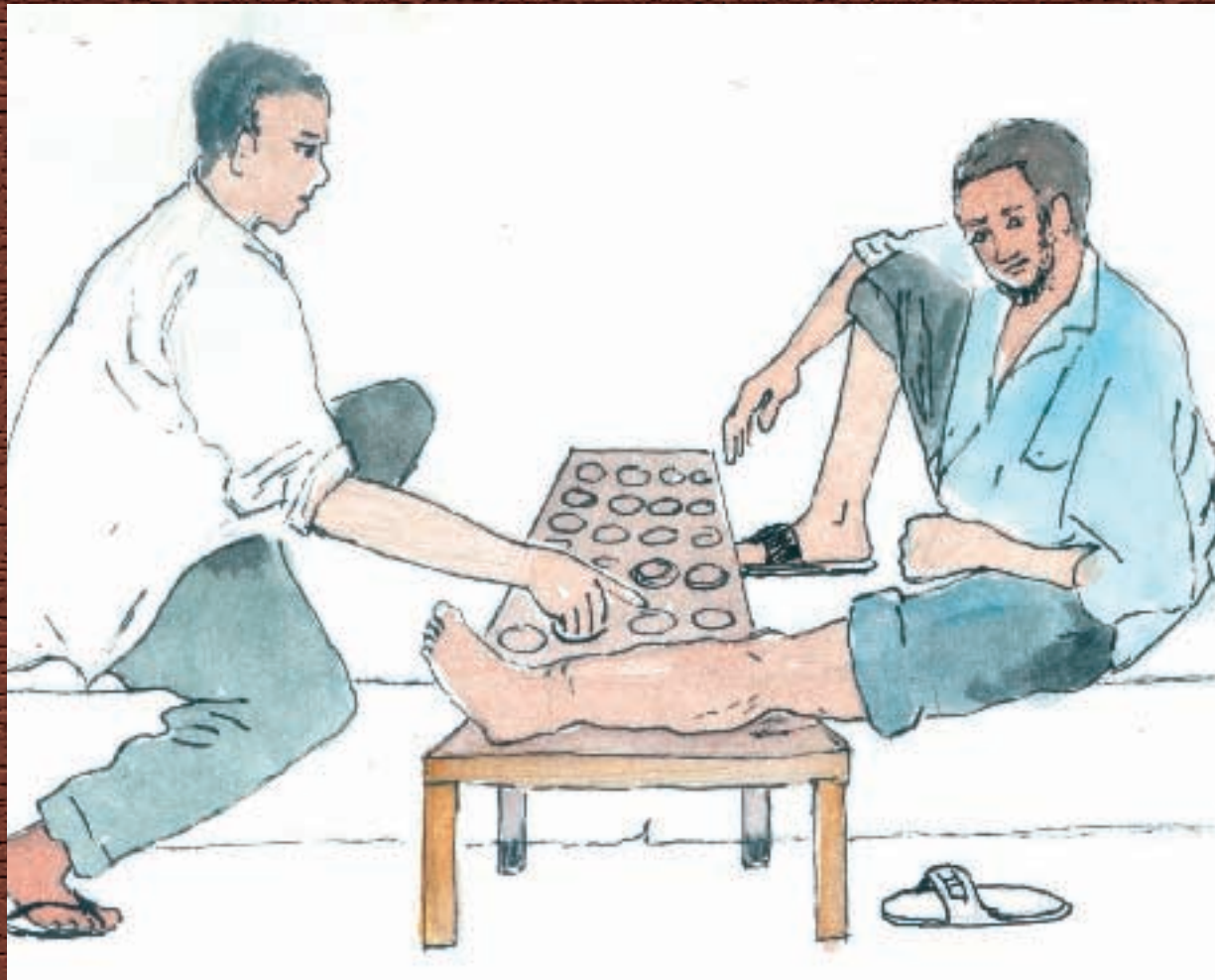
Figure 9

There are many things you can continue to do while sitting with your leg raised, such as playing with friends (Figure 9), and if you are a woman, breastfeeding your baby (Figure 10).



Figure 10

Make sure you elevate your leg in a comfortable position on a stool or cushion while you are sitting.



**Man elevating the leg
while playing**



**Woman elevating the leg
while breastfeeding her baby**

Elevate your leg during the day and at night

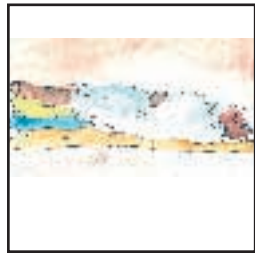


Figure 11

Elevate your leg at night by putting a pillow under the mattress (Figure 11) or bricks under the feet of the bed (Figure 12).

If another part of the body is swollen, such as breast, arm, or scrotum, you can elevate it at night by putting a pillow or a folded blanket under it.



Figure 12

Elevation is a simple measure that can improve the condition of your leg if you do it every day and that will enable you to carry out your daily activities more easily.



Elevation of the leg by putting a pillow under the mattress



Elevation of the leg by putting bricks under the feet of the bed

Exercise at any time and anywhere



Figure 13

You should exercise your leg several times throughout every day because movement is essential for improving the condition of your leg.

Exercise 1: Rise up and down on your toes — this exercise can be done standing or sitting (Figure 13).

Exercise 2: Flex the foot upwards and make a circle with the ankle (Figure 14).

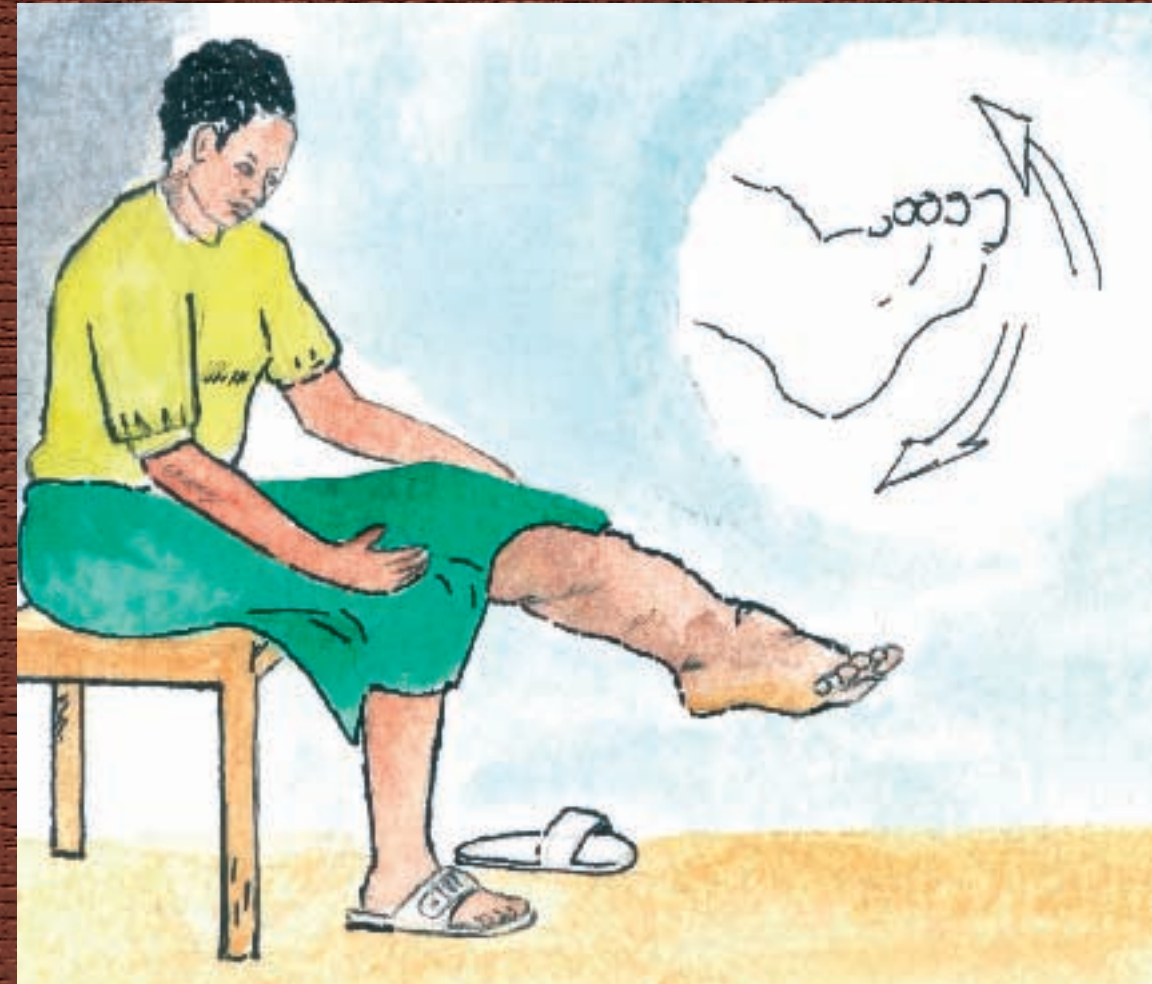


Figure 14

Do these exercises as often as you can. If you feel tired, stop exercising and rest.



**Exercise 1: rising up
and down on your toes**



**Exercise 2: flexing the foot and
making circles with the ankle**

Acute attack



Figure 15

Have you ever had the following:

- very intense, deep pain of the swollen leg?
- red and painful skin?
- fever (which can be very high), headache and shivering?
- nausea and/or vomiting?

If so, it means you are having acute attack.

By following all the measures described in the previous messages you should be able to prevent painful acute attack (Figure 15).



Woman suffering from acute attack

Acute attack



Figure 16

If you have acute attack, you should immediately do the following:

- soak the leg in a bucket or tub of cold water or apply a cold compress (Figure 16);
- continue to cool the leg until the pain stops;
- drink plenty of water;
- rest and do not exercise.



Cooling the leg during acute attack

Acute attack



Figure 17

Take medicine to bring down the fever (e.g., paracetamol every 4–6 hours until the fever goes down) (Figure 17), and if necessary, antibiotics prescribed by a doctor or nurse.

As soon as the pain has gone, wash your leg thoroughly, including in between the toes and folds. Make sure you carefully and gently dry your leg to avoid damaging your skin, not forgetting in between the toes and folds.



Figure 18

If you have any wounds or infection, apply antiseptic cream/ointment if prescribed by a doctor or nurse (Figure 18).

Further advice on acute attack:

If they feel well enough, nursing mothers can continue breastfeeding during acute attack as this will not harm the baby.

Acute attack is not contagious to others.



**Sufferer of acute attack
taking tablets for fever**



**Applying antiseptic
cream/ointment prescribed
by a doctor or nurse**

During acute attack DO NOT



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

- Put anything warm or hot on the skin (Figure 19);
- Cut the skin to remove excess fluid or blood (Figure 20);
- Bandage the leg;
- Rub onto the skin herbs, ashes, or anything that has not been prescribed by a doctor or nurse;
- Open a blister or cut it (Figure 21);
- Exercise.



**Man washing his leg
with hot water**



**Man cutting
the skin on his
leg to remove
excess fluid**



**Man bursting
a blister**



© World Health Organization 2003

This document is not a formal publication of the World Health Organization (WHO), and all rights are reserved by the Organization. This document may, however, be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced or translated, in part or in whole, but not for sale nor for use in conjunction with commercial purposes. The views expressed in documents by named authors are solely the responsibility of those authors.

Further information can be obtained from the CDS Information Resource Centre
WHO – 20, avenue Appia – 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
Fax: (+41) 22 791 4285 – E-mail: [cgsdoc@who.int](mailto:cdsdoc@who.int)