



LEPTOSPIROSIS

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by the bacterium *Leptospira* that can be found in contaminated water or soil. It affects many different kinds of animals and people.

TRANSMISSION

People can become infected through:

- Contact with water or soil containing urine or body fluids from infected animals, especially after flooding, or heavy rainfall.
- Directly touching body fluids from an infected animal.
- Eating food or drinking water contaminated by the urine of an infected animal.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Leptospirosis can cause a wide range of symptoms, including:



- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Body or muscle aches
- Vomiting or nausea
- Yellowed skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Red eyes
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea
- Rash

Many of these symptoms can be mistaken for other diseases. Some people have no symptoms.

It generally takes 2-30 days to get sick after having contact with the bacteria that cause leptospirosis. The disease may occur in two phases:

FIRST PHASE

- May have fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, vomiting, or diarrhea
- May feel better for a while but become ill again

SOME MAY SUFFER A MORE SEVERE SECOND PHASE

- With kidney or liver failure
- Inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis)

The illness can last from a few days to several weeks. Without treatment, getting better may take several months.

If you think you may have leptospirosis, see a healthcare provider right away so that they can run tests and start you on effective medicine to treat it.

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY



Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics and should be given as early as possible. Early treatment with antibiotics may help prevent severe illness and decrease how long you will get sick.

Intravenous (IV) antibiotics may be needed for people who have more severe leptospirosis symptoms.

Without treatment, leptospirosis in people can lead to kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, trouble breathing, and even death.

PREVENTION

If you may be exposed as a result of your job (veterinarians, veterinary staff, raising farm animals, dairy workers, animal control, butcher or slaughterhouse workers, sewage and sanitation workers, military and first responders):



- Wash hands frequently
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, footwear, eye protection)
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and equipment
- Vaccinate animals against leptospirosis, and isolate sick animals
- Control the rodent population around your work area

Lower your risk of getting leptospirosis:



- Don't swim or wade in water that might be contaminated with animal urine, especially after floods, or heavy rainfall.
- Avoid contact with animals that may be infected.
- Cover your cuts or scratches with waterproof bandages.
- Wear waterproof protective clothing, shoes or boots near floodwater or other water or soil that may be contaminated with animal urine.

References:

<https://r1mc.doh.gov.ph/index.php/gallery/2023/628-leptospirosis-p-e>
<https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/about/>

Image from: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/leptospirosis>