

# Leptospirosis

**Leptospirosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria. It can lead to potentially fatal infections of the kidney, liver, brain, lung or heart.**

## How do people get Leptospirosis?

There are two common ways to develop leptospirosis:

- Drinking or contact with water (such as by swimming, rafting or kayaking) or soil that has been contaminated by urine or body fluids of infected animals
- Exposure to the urine or body fluids of infected animals

## What are the symptoms of leptospirosis?

Symptoms of leptospirosis can develop anywhere from 2 days to 4 weeks after being exposed to the bacteria.

Common symptoms of leptospirosis include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle Aches
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal Pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Skin Rash
- Red Eyes

## Which animals can spread leptospirosis to people?

Many animals can spread leptospirosis, including pets (such as dogs), farm animals, or wildlife.

The animals that commonly develop or spread leptospirosis include:

- Rodents
- Raccoons
- Opossums
- Cattle
- Swine
- Dogs
- Horses
- Buffaloes
- Sheep
- Goats



## Am I at risk?

There is always a risk of infection for people who have contact with infected animals or soil/water where the bacteria are present. People who work outdoors or with animals may be at increased risk for infection, such as:

- Farmers
- Mine Workers
- Sewer Workers
- Slaughterhouse Workers
- Veterinarians/Animal Caretakers
- Fishermen and people who work with fish
- Dairy Farmers
- Military Personnel

Those involved in outdoor freshwater activities may also face an increased risk. Activities may include:

- Swimming
- Rafting
- Kayaking



## How is Leptospirosis treated?

If you have symptoms of leptospirosis, contact a doctor who can test for the disease.

If an infection is confirmed, it will likely be treated with antibiotics (medicine that can cure the disease). Treatment is most effective when started as soon as possible.

## How can Leptospirosis be prevented?

There are several steps you can take to help prevent getting leptospirosis. These include:

- See a veterinarian to get vaccines for your pets that can protect against this disease
- Avoid contact with animal urine or body fluids, especially if there are any cuts or abrasion of the skin
- Do not swim in, walk in, or swallow water that may contain animal urine
- Wear protective clothing or footwear near soil or water that may be contaminated with animal urine

## For More Information Contact CDC Info:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)/TTY 1-888-232-6348  
or visit our website at [www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis](http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis)

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases  
Division of High-Consequence Pathogens and Pathology

