

Infectious Diseases

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# ANTHRAX



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Anthrax is a serious disease caused by a very small organism made up of one cell. These organisms form spores (cells that can hibernate for a long period of time) that can cause illness. Anthrax usually occurs in animals. However, people can get anthrax too. This can happen if they have contact with an infected live or dead animal. People who work with farm animals or products from them can get infected. There are three ways to get anthrax. One way is through cuts or scrapes on the skin. This can cause skin sores. Another way is by breathing in anthrax spores. This can cause serious, life-threatening problems. The last way is by eating raw or under-cooked meat from an animal that had anthrax. This can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. The last two types of anthrax infection are the most serious, but they are rare. The skin form of anthrax occurs most often. Antibiotics can be used to treat all forms of anthrax. Antibiotics will make most people with the disease better, but people with any form of the disease may die, even if treated. Some people have threatened to use anthrax spores to make people sick on purpose. This is called bioterrorism. Public health agencies around the world are working to protect people against bioterrorism.