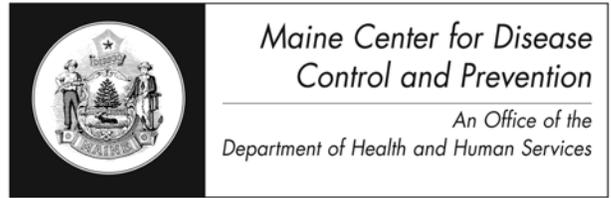


Leptospirosis

Fact Sheet



What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by bacteria that affects humans and animals. In humans it causes a wide range of symptoms and some infected persons may have no symptoms at all.

How is leptospirosis spread?

Humans become infected through contact with water, food, or soil containing urine from infected animals. This may happen by swallowing contaminated food or water, through contact, with the eyes, nose or mouth, or with broken skin. The disease-causing bacteria have been found in cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, rodents, and wild animals. Outbreaks are usually caused by exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. The disease is not known to be spread from person to person.

What are the signs and symptoms of leptospirosis?

Symptoms include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, and vomiting, and may include jaundice, red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or a rash. If the disease is not treated, the patient could develop kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, and respiratory distress. In rare cases death occurs.

How will I know if I have a leptospirosis infection?

Diagnosed is made by laboratory testing of specimens.

How is leptospirosis treated?

The disease is treated with antibiotics which should be started as soon as possible.

How can I prevent leptospirosis?

Lakes, rivers, canals, and ponds can present a risk of infection through swimming, drinking the water or contact with broken skin. Preventative measures include not swallowing water, covering broken skin with waterproof dressings, and seeking treatment immediately should you feel unwell. Protective clothing or footwear should be

worn by those exposed to contaminated water or soil because of their job or recreational activities.

Where is leptospirosis found?

The disease occurs worldwide but is most common in tropical climates with heavy rainfall. It is an occupational hazard for many people who work outdoors or with animals, for example, farmers, sewer workers, veterinarians, fish workers, dairy farmers, or military personnel. It is a recreational hazard for campers and hunters and those who participate in outdoor sports in contaminated areas and has been associated with swimming, wading, and whitewater rafting in contaminated lakes and rivers. The incidence is also increasing in urban areas.

Leptospirosis in Maine

The last two human cases of leptospirosis reported in Maine were diagnosed in 1996. In 2009, 20 cases were reported in dogs. Leptospirosis is under-diagnosed in the United States. The 50 to 150 human cases reported nationally each year are probably only a fraction of the total number of infections. For specific information on the number of leptospirosis infections reported in Maine, please visit the Maine CDC website: <http://www.mainepublichealth.gov> and refer to the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program Documents.

Is leptospirosis an emerging infectious disease?

Yes. Increased awareness of the disease has led to increased recognition. In 2005, fourteen participants in the United States Adventure Racing Association National Championship were infected during a race near Tampa, Florida. Leptospirosis is also a problem in deteriorating inner cities that are infested with rats.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.