

Information for persons potentially exposed to leptospirosis

Many species of wild and domestic animals are susceptible to leptospirosis and can excrete the bacteria in their urine. People can acquire leptospirosis infection if contaminated material (animal urine) contacts abraded skin, mucous membranes or is ingested.

Leptospirosis illness in people is characterized by the abrupt onset of fever, chills, muscle aches and headache. Symptoms may also include redness in the eyes, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin rashes. Symptoms typically appear between 5 and 14 days after exposure, averaging 10 days, and with a range of 2 days to 4 weeks after exposure. The illness lasts from a few days to several weeks or longer if not treated. If left untreated, leptospirosis can make you very sick. In rare instances, people can die of complications from the disease when left untreated.

Leptospirosis in humans is confirmed by laboratory testing of a blood or urine sample, and it is treated by antibiotics. When medically indicated, treatment with appropriate antibiotics should be initiated as early as possible. In some people with significant exposure to leptospira bacteria, preventive antibiotics may be recommended as a precaution.

There is no standard approach or protocol for management of occupational exposure to leptospirosis. The risk of transmission in this exposure circumstance is unknown.

In consultation with the Wisconsin Division of Public Health and the Madison Department of Public Health, University Health Services makes the following recommendations:

1. All persons who were potentially exposed to an animal with known infection should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of leptospirosis as described above. You should monitor your health for a period of **one month** after the exposure, particularly for fever. If you develop a fever $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ (38°C) within this period, you should:
 - seek care from a health care provider as soon as possible
 - inform your health care provider that you were exposed to leptospirosis
 - an infectious disease consultation may be recommended by your provider
 - you or your provider should notify Craig Roberts at the UHS Community Health Program, 608-262-6720
2. Persons who had direct exposure to an ill animal's urine should usually receive antibiotics as a precaution. Exposure is defined as animal urine coming in contact with your bare skin, mouth or eyes. The risk associated with exposure to other body fluids is unknown, but is probably negligible. The recommended treatment is a one-week course of either doxycycline or amoxicillin. Students may contact Craig Roberts at University Health Services for more information or to obtain a prescription.

Gloves and other barrier precautions should be used whenever exposure to blood or urine can be reasonably anticipated while caring for an animal, regardless of the animal's infection status. For an animal with leptospirosis, proper use of gloves would prevent any contact with urine and mitigate the need for antibiotics.

Additional information:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/communicable/factsheets/Leptospirosis.htm>

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_g.htm