

LEPTOSPIROSIS (WEIL'S DISEASE)

Patient Information Fact Sheet

›What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis, also known as Weil's disease, is a bacterial infection that can cause a range of symptoms. The common signs include fever, headache, and muscle pain. If left untreated, meningitis and liver/kidney damage may develop. In rare cases, leptospirosis can lead to death. This disease is found worldwide except for the Polar Regions.

›How do you contract leptospirosis?

Humans become infected through contact with water or soil containing urine from infected animals. This may occur when the infected water or soil comes into contact with broken skin or mucosal surfaces, such as the eyes or nose. Swallowing contaminated food or water has also been shown to cause leptospirosis. It is a recreational hazard for those who participate in outdoor sports in contaminated areas and has been associated with swimming, canoeing and white-water rafting in contaminated lakes and rivers.

The time from exposure to the bacteria to developing symptoms is usually 2–28 days. Leptospirosis can last from a few days to 3 weeks or longer. Without treatment, recovery may take several months. Diagnosis can be difficult and is usually confirmed by blood or urine tests.

›How is leptospirosis treated and prevented?

Antibiotics such as **doxycycline** (Monodox, Vibramycin) and **penicillin** (Bicillin C-R, Bicillin L-A, Pfizerpen) are used to treat the condition. These treatments should be started promptly. If you have any symptoms or suspicion you may have contracted leptospirosis, contact a health care provider as soon as possible.

Avoid swimming and wading in potentially contaminated water and wear protective clothing when work requires such exposure.

›Further information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/>

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