

Brucellosis

FACTSHEET

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What is Brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease, which may affect various organs of the body. The bacteria that causes this disease is primarily passed among animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, deer, pigs, dogs, and several other animals. Humans become infected after having contact with animals that are infected with Brucellosis.

Who gets Brucellosis?

People of all ages who are exposed to the bacteria that cause the disease can get Brucellosis. It is more likely to be found in people associated with livestock. Brucellosis is not common in the United States.

What are the symptoms of Brucellosis?

Brucellosis can cause a wide range of symptoms that are similar to the flu and may include fever, sweats, headaches, back pains, and physical weakness. Severe infections of the nervous system or lining of the heart may occur. Brucellosis can also cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include recurrent fevers, joint pain, and fatigue or tiredness.

How is Brucellosis spread?

Brucellosis is spread to humans in one of three ways: by eating or drinking something that is contaminated with the germ that causes Brucellosis; by breathing the organism in, or by having the germ enter the body through an open wound. The most common way to become infected is by eating or drinking contaminated milk products. Direct person-to-person spread is extremely rare.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually occur within five to sixty days after exposure.

Is a person with Brucellosis contagious?

Person-to-person spread is extremely rare. However, it has been reportedly spread through an infected mother's breast milk to her infant and through sexual relations. Therefore, infected mothers should avoid breast-feeding their infants. Safe sex practices (the use of condoms) should always be practiced.

How is Brucellosis treated?

Brucellosis treatment may be difficult. Doctors may prescribe several effective antibiotics.

How can Brucellosis be prevented?

Drinking and eating pasteurized products only can prevent Brucellosis. If you are not sure if the product has been pasteurized then don't eat or drink it. Hunters and herdsman should use rubber gloves when handling dead animals. There currently is no vaccine for Brucellosis.

Want more information?

Information about Brucellosis and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-9371.

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