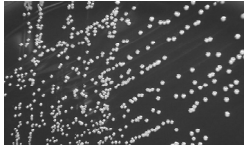


Brucellosis

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a disease, caused by bacteria, which affects many different kinds of animals – including sheep, goats, cattle, deer, elk, pigs,



Brucellosis bacteria

and dogs. However, it can also cause a disease with flu-like symptoms in humans. People with brucellosis may develop fever, sweats, headaches,

back pains, and physical weakness. In severe cases, the central nervous system and the lining of the heart may be affected. One form of the illness may also cause long-lasting symptoms, including recurrent fevers, joint pain, and fatigue. Symptoms can appear anywhere from five to 60 days after exposure.

Human cases of brucellosis are uncommon, with only 100 to 200 cases a year reported in the U.S. Although brucellosis can make you very sick, it is rarely fatal.

How do people get brucellosis?

People can be infected with brucellosis bacteria by

- eating or drinking something that's been contaminated with the bacteria
- inhaling the bacteria
- having a wound that gets infected with the bacteria

The most common way that people get the disease is by drinking or eating unpasteurized, contaminated milk or cheese. You can also get it by breathing in the bacteria. That happens less often, but it can be a hazard for people in some kinds of jobs – people who work in labs or slaughterhouses, for example. Infected wounds can be a problem for veterinarians, slaughterhouse workers, or hunters. Hunters

can get it by eating food that they have accidentally contaminated with brucellosis bacteria, while cleaning wild game.

It would also be possible to deliberately expose people to brucellosis, by releasing the bacteria into the air or putting it in food.

Can you get it from other people?

It's possible for people to infect each other with brucellosis – but it's extremely rare. In rare cases, nursing mothers can pass the bacteria to their babies. The bacteria can also be transmitted sexually.

Can brucellosis be treated?

Brucellosis can be treated with antibiotics – but it can take a long time, and treatment can be difficult. Depending on the severity of the illness – and when treatment is begun – it can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months to recover.

Can brucellosis be prevented?

There is no vaccine available for brucellosis. However, you can reduce your risk if you avoid eating or drinking unpasteurized milk, cheese and ice cream when you travel. Hunters should wear rubber gloves when handling the internal organs of animals.

Why is brucellosis considered a possible terror weapon?

Brucellosis can make people sick – and keep them from normal activity – for a long time. It is easy to release the bacteria in ways that will expose people to the illness. Though rarely fatal, it can make a lot of people sick. Identifying and tracking a brucellosis outbreak would be difficult for public health.



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What should I do if I think I may have brucellosis?

People who believe they have brucellosis should see a doctor. You should also contact your local law enforcement agency if you have any reason to suspect unusual activity in connection with an outbreak of brucellosis – or any other serious illness.