

BRUCELLOSIS

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Brucella*. These bacteria are mainly passed among animals. Brucellosis is rare in the United States but it does occur.

There are three categories of infections: 1) acute; 2) undulant; and 3) chronic.

How can someone come into contact with brucellosis?

Brucellosis is not commonly spread from person to person. Humans can come into contact with brucellosis by —

- Drinking or eating dairy products that have the *Brucella* bacteria in them;
- Having the bacteria enter the body through skin wounds; or
- Breathing in the bacteria (inhalation).

Mothers who are breastfeeding may spread the infection to their infants. Sexual transmission also has been reported.

Brucellosis as a weapon: The *Brucella* bacteria could be aerosolized and released into the air.

Please note: Just because you come into contact with brucellosis does not mean you will get sick from it.

What happens if someone gets sick from brucellosis?

- **Acute form**
 - Symptoms are like those of the flu: fever, sweats, headaches, muscle pains, lack of energy, back pain and physical weakness.
 - Serious infections of the central nervous system or lining of the heart may occur.
 - This form lasts up to eight weeks.
- **Undulant form**
 - Patients may display varying degrees of fever and arthritis. Young men may have inflammation of the testes.
 - This form lasts up to one year.
- **Chronic form**
 - Brucellosis can cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include fevers, joint pain and lack of energy.
 - Episodes of depression may occur.
 - This form lasts more than one year.

How likely is someone to die from brucellosis?

Not many people (less than 2 percent) die from this disease. Depending on when treatment is received and how serious the illness is, recovery may take a few weeks to several months.

What is the treatment for brucellosis?

- **Prevention of illness after contact:** It is not known if antibiotics will help in preventing infection after contact.
- **Treatment of illness:** If a person is showing signs of brucellosis, the person needs to go to the hospital for treatment. Health care providers can give out antibiotics that can be taken at home. Usually, two antibiotics are used together for two to six weeks to prevent another infection.

People who are sick from brucellosis do not need to be isolated.

Is there a vaccine for brucellosis?

No, there is no vaccine available for humans.

What should be done if someone comes into contact with brucellosis?

If you think that you or someone you know may have come into contact with brucellosis, contact the local county health department right away. (Visit www.idph.state.il.us//local/alpha.htm for a listing of all county health departments in Illinois or check your local phone book.)

If you or someone you know is showing symptoms of brucellosis, call your health care provider or the Illinois Poison Center right away. The toll-free number for the poison center is 1-800-222-1222.

Where can one get more information about brucellosis?

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/brucellosis/index.asp
- Illinois Department of Public Health www.idph.state.il.us
- Illinois Poison Center www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org