

GLANDERS

What is glanders?

Glanders is a disease caused by the bacteria, *Burkholderia mallei*. Glanders mostly occurs in horses, mules and donkeys. Humans can get the disease, but it is rare. Laboratory workers and those in direct contact with infected animals have become sick with glanders. Glanders has not been seen in the United States since 1945. It is thought by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that glanders could be used as a weapon.

Glanders can occur as the following infections:

- Local infection of skin (cutaneous) or mucous membranes (upper respiratory)
- Pulmonary infection (lungs)
- Septicemic form (bloodstream)

Human cases may result from a combination of all three infections.

How can someone come into contact with glanders?

Glanders can spread from person to person. Humans can come into contact with it when —

- Bacteria enter a cut or open wound; or
- Bacteria are inhaled.

Glanders as a weapon: As a weapon, glanders may be aerosolized and released into the air.

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

What happens if someone gets sick from glanders?

The symptoms of glanders depend on how a person gets it.

- **Cutaneous infection (skin):** A patient will have swelling and sores at the site of the skin infection. The person also may have swollen lymph nodes.
- **Upper respiratory infection:** A patient will have mucus or pus discharge from the mouth, nose or eyes.
- **Pulmonary infection (lungs):** When the lungs are infected, a person may develop pneumonia, have an abscess in the lungs or have large pockets of fluid in the lung cavity.
- **Septicemic form (bloodstream):** This form of infection develops when the bacteria spread to the bloodstream from other parts of the body such as the skin or lungs. It can cause fever, shivers, sweats, lack of energy, chest pain and diarrhea.

How likely is someone to die from glanders?

Most cases of glanders do not result in death unless the infection spreads to the bloodstream. In those cases, the person will usually die within seven to 10 days. It is unknown how deadly the other forms of glanders are because there have been no cases in the United States since 1945.

What is the treatment for glanders?

- **Prevention of illness after contact:** Antibiotics are not routinely used to prevent infections but may be considered by a health care professional. The drug of choice is a sulfa-based drug called TMP-SMX.
- **Treatment of illness:** Because human cases of glanders are rare, there is little information about the effectiveness of antibiotic treatment. Some medicine has been found to work in experiments with animals and humans. Your health care provider will determine the best course of treatment.

Is there a vaccine for glanders?

There is no vaccine for glanders.

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

If you think that you or someone you know may have come into contact with glanders, 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 glanders, 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 glanders?

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/glanders_g.htm
- Illinois Department of Public Health www.idph.state.il.us
- Illinois Poison Center www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org