



BRUCELLOSIS

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a zoonotic disease (diseases spread from animals to people) caused by bacteria of the genus *Brucella*. Brucellosis is found worldwide and affects domestic animals (such as horse, cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and dogs). Brucellosis can occur in people exposed to infected animals or unpasteurized milk. Brucellosis in persons is not very common in Canada.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually appear within five to 30 days. Brucellosis can cause flu-like symptoms and include fever, profuse sweating, headaches, chills, joint pains and physical weakness. If not treated, brucellosis can cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include recurrent fevers, joint pain and fatigue.

How is brucellosis spread?

People can become infected through direct contact with or touching infected animals or tissues, especially the placenta, birth fluids, blood and urine. The bacteria can enter the body through cuts in the skin. Infection can also occur by eating contaminated food products such as unpasteurized dairy products (milk and cheese). Inhalation or breathing in organisms can pose a hazard for persons working in abattoirs and laboratories.

How is brucellosis diagnosed?

Brucellosis is diagnosed by symptoms, history of exposure and laboratory testing.

Who is at risk of brucellosis infections?

Usually occupational exposures result in infection in persons (farmers, veterinarians and abattoir workers).

How can brucellosis be prevented?

Practise good personal hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, after handling animals, after handling raw meats and before preparing or eating food.

Practise basic food safety precautions. Thoroughly cook all meats (meat, poultry and seafood). Drink and eat only pasteurized dairy products (milk, cheese and yogurt).

Follow basic precautions when handling animals. Wear waterproof gloves and thoroughly wash hands after handling, especially pregnant animals giving birth.

How is brucellosis treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat brucellosis. Prompt treatment can prevent chronic infection.

What is the Public Health response?

Health care providers and laboratories must notify cases of brucellosis to Public Health. Public Health staff may interview the health care provider and patient (or caregivers) to find out how the infection occurred, identify other people at risk of infection, implement control measures and provide other advice.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare 811.

Useful websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca