

Plague

FACT SHEET

What is Plague?

Plague is a serious illness caused by a bacteria.

Who Can Get Plague?

Bubonic plague is spread when the fleas of infected rodents bite humans. Respiratory droplets from infected humans or cats spread pneumonic plague. People who handle infected tissues or fluids from infected animals are at increased risk of getting plague (e.g. veterinarians, researchers).

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Fever, chills, headache
- Weakness
- People with bubonic plague may have swollen tender lymph nodes
- People with pneumonic plague may have a cough, fever, and difficulty breathing.

What is the Treatment?

Antibiotics prescribed by a doctor can treat plague. Treatment is most successful if it is started as early as possible.

How Can You Prevent Plague?

If you live in an area where plague occurs:

- Eliminate sources of food and nesting places for rodents around homes, work places, and recreation areas; remove brush, rock piles, junk, cluttered firewood, and potential-food supplies, such as pet and wild animal food. Make your home rodent-proof.
- If you anticipate being exposed to rodent fleas, apply insect repellents to clothing and skin, according to label instructions, to prevent fleabites. Wear gloves when handling potentially infected animals.
- Treat pet dogs and cats for flea control regularly and do not allow these animals to roam freely
- To avoid potential risk of exposure:
 - Safely clean up rodent-infested areas
 - Air out infested spaces before cleanup
 - Spray areas of infestation and all excreta, nesting, and other materials with household disinfectant or 10% bleach solution then clean up, seal in bags, and dispose
 - Avoid sweeping, vacuuming, or stirring dust until the area is thoroughly wet with disinfectant
 - Wear rubber gloves; disinfect gloves before removal, and wash hands afterwards