

BRUCELLOSIS FACTSHEET

What is Brucellosis?

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria. People can get the disease when they are in contact with infected animals or animal products contaminated with the bacteria. Animals that are most infected include sheep, cattle, goats, pigs, and dogs, among others.

Who can get Brucellosis?

Anyone who is exposed to the bacteria that cause the disease can get Brucellosis. People who have close contact with animals or animal carcasses, such as veterinarians, and people who work at slaughterhouses and meat packing plants are at increased risk.

What are the symptoms of Brucellosis?

Brucellosis can cause a wide range of symptoms that are like the flu and may include fever, sweats, headaches, back pains, and physical weakness. Severe infections of the nervous system or lining of the heart may occur. Brucellosis can also cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include recurrent fevers, joint pain, and fatigue or tiredness.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually occur within five days to six months after exposure.

How does someone get Brucellosis?

The most common way to be infected is by consuming unpasteurized/raw dairy products. Bacteria can also enter the body through wounds in the skin or mucous membranes if the person comes in contact with infected animals or animal carcasses. Breathing in the bacteria that causes brucellosis may also lead to infection. This risk is generally greater for people in laboratories that work with the bacteria. Direct person-to-person spread is extremely rare.

How is Brucellosis treated?

Brucellosis treatment may be difficult. Doctors may prescribe several effective antibiotics.

How can people protect themselves against Brucellosis?

Do not consume undercooked meat or unpasteurized dairy products. If you are not sure if the product has been pasteurized, do not eat or drink it. People who handle animal tissues (such as hunters and animal herdsman) should protect themselves by using rubber gloves, goggles, and gowns or aprons when handling dead animals.

Where can I get more information?

Information about Brucellosis and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please <https://dchealth.dc.gov> or call (202) 442-9021.