

Brucellosis (undulant fever, Bang's disease)

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is brucellosis ?

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that may affect various organs of the body, producing a wide variety of signs and symptoms.

Who gets brucellosis?

Although everyone is susceptible and may get the disease if exposed to the *Brucella* bacteria, brucellosis is most commonly found in people who work with livestock or in slaughterhouses, or who consume unpasteurized dairy products. Occasionally, persons who work in bacteriology laboratories can get exposed to the bacteria.

How is brucellosis spread?

The bacteria that cause this disease are found in unpasteurized milk and unpasteurized dairy products from infected cows and goats. It is also found in certain body fluids like blood, urine, and semen, and in aborted fetuses from infected cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and less commonly, dogs. Certain wild animals such as deer, elk, and bison may carry the *Brucella* bacteria. It is unlikely that this disease can be spread from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

Symptoms of brucellosis include intermittent fever of variable duration, headache, weakness, swollen lymph nodes, profuse sweating, chills, weight loss and generalized aching. Brucellosis can also cause infection and inflammation of the bone, testicles, and the lining of the heart.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The time period is highly variable, but symptoms usually appear within 5 to 30 days.

Does past infection with brucellosis make a person immune?

It is unlikely that an individual will be reinfected.

What is the treatment for brucellosis?

Physicians will prescribe a combination of antibiotics to cure the disease. Early diagnosis leading to prompt treatment is essential to prevent chronic infection.

What can be done to prevent the spread of brucellosis?

People can reduce their risk of infection by avoiding dairy products made from unpasteurized milk and by avoiding contact with infected cattle, hogs, sheep, goats or dogs. Animals can be tested by a veterinarian to determine if they are infected. Farmers and veterinarians who vaccinate livestock against brucellosis should handle the vaccine with caution to avoid accidental needle sticks or splashing of vaccine into the eyes, nose, or mouth. Persons working in clinical microbiology laboratories should follow established biosafety guidelines when working with bacteriologic cultures.