

# CDRS

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

# LEPTOSPIROSIS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. It is caused by bacteria of the genus *Leptospira*.

## Symptoms

- In humans it causes a wide range of symptoms, and some infected persons have no symptoms at all. In general, two clinical types are described: anicteric and icteric.
  - Anicteric Leptospirosis has initial symptoms that last 4-7 days and may mimic flu: fever, myalgia, conjunctivitis, neck stiffness, nausea and sometimes vomiting. In the second phase (immune stage) fever is usually not present or is low-grade. Headaches, meningitis, myalgia, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain are also common in this stage. Patients usually recover in about a month, although leptospiuria may continue for several months.
  - Icteric Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) is the severe form of the disease only developed in 5-10% of cases. The infection progresses to hepatitis, nephritis, meningitis, respiratory distress, hemorrhagic tendencies, with associated jaundice and azotemia. Patient recovery may take several months.

## Transmission

- Outbreaks of leptospirosis are usually caused by exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals.
- *Leptospira* have been found in cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, rodents, and wild animals. Humans become infected through contact with water, food, or soil containing urine from these infected animals.
- This can happen by swallowing contaminated food or water; through contact with mucosal surfaces, such as the eyes or nose; or through broken skin.
- The disease is not spread from person to person.

## Treatment

- Antibiotics should be given as soon as possible.
- Intravenous antibiotics might be required for persons with more severe symptoms.

## Prevention

- The risk of acquiring leptospirosis can be greatly reduced by avoiding swimming or wading in water that might be contaminated with animal urine. Protective clothing or footwear should be worn by those exposed to contaminated water or soil because of their job or recreational activities.

**All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.**

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

[www.cdinfo.com](http://www.cdinfo.com)

Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

c/o The Franklin County Board of Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215

(614) 719-8888 ♦ (614) 719-8890 fax ♦ [cds@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:cds@franklincountyohio.gov) - email

