

Plague General Information

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
- swollen tender lymph nodes (bubonic plague)
- cough, fever, and difficulty breathing (pneumonic plague)

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.