What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection causing mild to severe flu-like illness. Leptospira bacteria are spread in the urine of infected animals. People catch leptospirosis when Leptospira bacteria in freshwater streams, mud or animal urine get into their eyes, nose, mouth or broken skin.

Other more serious symptoms:
- Stiff neck
- Coughing up blood
- Jaundice
- (yellowing of skin and eyes)
- Heart failure

For more information, call:

Oahu:
Disease Outbreak Control Division (808) 586-4586
Vector Control Branch (808) 483-2535

Neighbor Islands:
Maui: (808) 984-8213
Kaua'i: (808) 241-3563
East Hawai'i: (808) 933-0912
West Hawai'i: (808) 322-4877

DOH website at:

CDC website at:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_g.htm

Information

Nondiscrimination in Services
We provide access to our programs and activities without regard to race, color, national origin (including language), age, sex, religion, or disability. Write or call this program or our departmental Affirmative Action Officer at Box 3378, Honolulu, Hawaii 96801-9984, or at 586-4616 (voice/TTY) within 180 days of a problem.

Linda Lingle, Governor
Chiyouma Leinaala Fukino, M.D., Director of Health

If you think you have symptoms of leptospirosis, see a doctor right away.

Tell the doctor about any recent contact with freshwater or animals and ask them to test for leptospirosis.

Antibiotic treatment may be effective if the disease is diagnosed early.

Leptospirosis:
A bacterial disease that is passed from animals to humans. Rats and mice are the most important sources in Hawaii. Domestic and wild animals such as rodents, mongooses, pigs, cattle, livestock and dogs can also transmit the disease. Leptospirosis is found worldwide but is more common in tropical areas like Hawaii. Leptospira bacteria can live for long periods in fresh water and mud.

How are people infected?
- Swimming, wading, hiking and fishing in freshwater ponds, waterfalls or streams contaminated with animal urine.
- Farming, gardening or touching moist soil or vegetation contaminated with animal urine.
- Touching urine, tissues, or blood of infected animals.
- Drinking contaminated fresh water.
- Exposure to flood waters.

Symptoms:
- Usually symptoms occur in 7-14 days, with a range of 2 to 30 days after being exposed.
- Often mild and resemble the flu
  - Fever
  - Nausea
  - Headache
  - Vomiting
  - Chills
  - Diarrhea
  - Muscle aches
  - Sweating
  - Body pains
  - Weakness
  - Red eyes
  - Loss of appetite

Other more serious symptoms:
- Stiff neck
- Coughing up blood
- Jaundice
- (yellowing of skin and eyes)
- Heart failure
- Coughing up blood
- Kidney failure
- Liver damage
- Death

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How leptospirosis is spread

• Animals such as rats, mice, mongooses, livestock and dogs get infected with *Leptospira* bacteria.

• Urine of infected animals contaminates soil and fresh water.

• Humans can catch leptospirosis from the contaminated fresh water and soil.

• *Leptospira* bacteria enter the eyes, nose, mouth and open cuts or wounds.

Steps to avoid getting leptospirosis

1. **Avoid swimming**, wading, hiking or playing in freshwater streams or waterfalls especially when you have cuts or abrasions. Do not dive or put your head underwater if you swim in freshwater streams or waterfalls.

2. **Protect yourself when you are**:• Working in moist soil or water
• Farming or gardening
• Clearing vegetation
• Caring for pets and livestock
• Fishing and prawning
• Hunting and butchering animals

   **By wearing:**
   • Gloves
   • Boots
   • Long sleeves
   • Heavy pants or waders
   • Goggles

3. **Treat stream water and catchment water** by vigorous boiling for 1 minute or chemical treatment before drinking. Filters may not work.

4. **Control rodents and wildlife** around your home by trapping, removing nests, and poisoning. Do not allow them to get to food and garbage. Keep water catchment areas free from branches and prevent access by animals. Call the Department of Health (see contact information on back) for help.

5. **Vaccinate pets and farm animals** for leptospirosis. Ask your veterinarian for information.

6. **Drain standing water**