



## Hawaii State Department of Health

### Disease Investigation Branch

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## Murine typhus

### What is Murine typhus?

Murine typhus is a disease carried by rodents (rats, mice, mongoose) and spread by fleas. It is caused by a bacteria called *Rickettsia typhi*. The fleas can also live on other small mammals, including pets, such as cats and dogs. Once a flea is infected, it can spread the disease for the rest of its life.

### How do you get it?

The disease is spread through the bites of infected fleas. It is also possible to be spread through inhalation of infected, dried flea feces. Murine typhus is not spread from one person to another, or from person to fleas.

### What are the symptoms of Murine typhus?

The symptoms come on suddenly and include fever, headaches, body ache, joint ache, nausea, vomiting, and/or stomach aches. Some people may develop rash few days after the initial symptoms. The illness seldom lasts longer than 2 weeks, but may last for months with complication if not untreated.

### When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected flea or inhaling infected, dried feces.

### What is the treatment for Murine typhus?

A doctor can prescribe antibiotic medicine to treat typhus.

### How do you keep from getting it?

Reduce your contact with fleas, rats, mice, and mongoose. To reduce rodent populations near your home, remove any brush or trash, and keep the grass mowed. Feed pet single servings of food and water, and do not leave overnight.

Treat your house pets regularly for fleas. Use insect repellents if you will be exposed to fleas.

Trapping rodents live is preferable to poisoning the rodents to prevent the fleas from finding new hosts. After the capture, double bag dead rodents and discard in trash bins.

Use extreme care when using pesticides and rat/mice poisons around children and pets. Note, if other animals and birds eat poisons, or eat poisoned rodent, they also may die.

For more information, see CDC's website.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/rickettsial-spotted-and-typhus-fevers-and-related-infections-including-anaplasmosis-and-ehrlichiosis>