



Brucellosis Fact Sheet (English)

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium called Brucella. Humans become infected by coming in contact with animals or animal products that are contaminated with the bacteria.

Where does it come from?

The brucellosis bacteria are usually passed among animals. The bacteria can harm sheep, cattle, bison, elk, dogs, coyotes, deer and pigs. Brucellosis is common in countries where animal disease control programs are not effective. Brucellosis is not very common in the U.S.; but it can be a possible agent of bioterrorism.

How is brucellosis spread to humans?

The bacteria that cause brucellosis are found in unpasteurized milk and dairy products from sick cows, sheep and goats. Humans can get infected in one of three ways: eating or drinking something that has Brucella, breathing in the bacteria, or having the bacteria enter the body through skin wounds. The most common way to be infected is by eating or drinking milk or dairy products that have brucellosis bacteria. The bacteria do not pass from person to person.

What are the signs and symptoms of brucellosis in humans?

The signs and symptoms are similar to the flu and may include fever, sweats, headaches, back pains, chills, weight loss and physical weakness. Severe infections of organs such as the liver, spleen, the central nervous systems or the lining of the heart may occur. Brucellosis can also cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include recurrent fevers, joint pain and fatigue.

How is brucellosis treated?

A combination of antibiotics for 6 weeks is recommended to treat and prevent infection returning. Depending on the timing of treatment and severity of illness, it may take a few weeks to several months to get better.

Is there a vaccine to protect humans from brucellosis?

No. There is no vaccine available for humans, only for farm animals.

Can we prevent the spread of brucellosis?

Yes. Do not drink unpasteurized milk or eat cheese or milk or dairy products while traveling. If you are not sure that the dairy product is pasteurized, do not eat it. People working with animals should protect their open wounds or cuts with bandages and use gloves. Wash your hands with soap after touching any animals or raw meat products.

Where can I get more information?

Visit these websites for more information about Brucellosis.

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC): http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_brucellosis.htm
- CDC Travelers' Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>
- World Health Organization (WHO): <http://www.who.int/topics/brucellosis/en/>
- WHO Travelers' Health: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, and Washington State Department of Health.