

T U L A R E M I A

WHAT IS TULAREMIA?

Tularemia is a highly infectious disease caused by bacteria common in animals, especially rodents, rabbits and hares. Because of this, it is often referred to as “rabbit fever”. There are many forms of the disease, and it takes very few tularemia organisms to infect a person. Tularemia is considered a possible agent that could be used by terrorists.

TREATMENT

After potential exposure or diagnosis, early antibiotic treatment is recommended. Numerous antibiotics can be used, but testing of the tularemia bacterium must be done to determine which antibiotics would be most effective. A vaccine is currently under review by the Food and Drug Administration, and is not currently available in the United States.

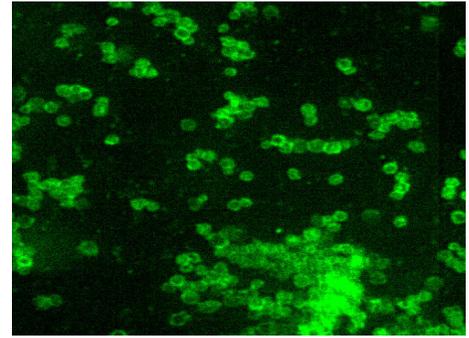


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SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of Tularemia typically appear within 3 to 5 days, but his can range from 1 to 14 days. Depending on the route of exposure, tularemia may cause skin ulcers, inflamed eyes, sore throat or pneumonia. If the bacteria were inhaled, symptoms might include fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, joint pain, and dry cough. People with pneumonia symptoms may begin to cough up blood and develop chest pains. Flu-like symptoms are common to many diseases and usually mean that you simply have the flu. However, if symptoms progress, contact a doctor.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How do people become infected?**
Typically, people become infected through bites of ticks and deerflies that have fed on an infected animals, by handling a sick or dead animal, by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, or by inhaling airborne bacteria.
- **Does Tularemia occur naturally in the United States?**
Yes, Tularemia is a widespread disease in animals. About 200 human cases a year are reported. Most cases occur in the south-central and western states. Nearly all are in rural areas and are caused by bites from ticks or biting flies.
- **Can tularemia be spread from person-to-person?**
Direct person-to-person spread of Tularemia is extremely unlikely to occur.
- **Can I die from Tularemia?**
Currently, death rates are low, about 2%. Before antibiotics were available, the death rate was about 7 %. With early detection and treatment, death rates are greatly reduced.
- **How long can tularemia bacteria exist in the environment?**
It can remain alive for weeks in soil and water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>