



Anthrax

(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a disease caused by bacteria. Anthrax usually occurs in wild or family animals, like cattle, sheep, goats, and other animals. It can also occur in humans when they are exposed to infected animals or tissue from infected animals.

What are the types of Anthrax infection?

There are three known types of Anthrax: Skin Anthrax, stomach Anthrax, and lung Anthrax.

How is Anthrax spread?

Anthrax is not known to spread from one person to another. Anthrax spores can live in the soil for many years, and humans can become infected with Anthrax by handling products from infected animals or by inhaling Anthrax spores from contaminated animal products. Anthrax can also be spread by eating undercooked meat from infected animals. Anthrax spores can be used as a bioterrorist weapon, as was the case in 2001 when it was distributed through the postal system.

How soon do infected people get sick?

Symptoms can appear within 7 days of coming in contact with the spores for all three types of Anthrax. For lung Anthrax, symptoms can appear within a week or can take up to 42 days to appear.

What are the symptoms of Anthrax?

Skin Anthrax:

- Itchy bump that looks like an insect bite but within 1-2 days turns into a painless ulcer. It is usually 1-3 centimeters in diameter, with an area of dying tissue in the center.
- Lymph glands in a nearby area may swell.

About **20%** of untreated cases of skin Anthrax will result in death.



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Intestinal/Stomach Anthrax:

This form of Anthrax may be a result of eating infected meat and causes intestinal problems. First signs are as follows:

- Upset stomach
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Stomach pain
- Bloody diarrhea

Intestinal Anthrax **can** result in death.

Lung Anthrax:

First signs may remind you of the common cold. After many days the symptoms may develop into the following:

- Severe breathing problems
- Shock

Lung Anthrax **usually** results in death.

How is Anthrax found?

There are blood exams that test for Anthrax. Also, for lung Anthrax, chest x-rays can be done to look for certain reactions to the bacteria.

How is Anthrax treated?

Doctors can use antibiotics. Treatment should begin early. If left untreated, the disease can cause death.

Are there ways to prevent Anthrax infection?

There is a vaccine to prevent Anthrax, but it is not currently available for the general public. In the event of an Anthrax attack, healthcare providers will administer vaccine and antibiotics to people who may have been exposed to Anthrax and are not sick.

Where can I get more information on Anthrax?

New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services (NJDHSS)

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/er/documents/ANTHRAXfaq.pdf>

Centers for Disease & Control Prevention

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/Anthrax/faq/>