



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
BRUCELLOSIS
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a disease caused by bacteria. These bacteria are passed among animals.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

In humans, brucellosis can cause a range of symptoms that are similar to the flu and may include:

- Fever
- Sweats
- Headaches
- Back pains
- Physical weakness

Severe infections of the central nervous system or lining of the heart may occur. Long-lasting or chronic symptoms include:

- Recurrent fevers
- Joint pain
- Fatigue

Where is brucellosis found?

The bacteria that cause brucellosis affect sheep, goats, cattle, deer, elk, pigs, dogs, and many other animals. Humans become



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infected by coming in contact with animals or animal products that are contaminated with these bacteria.

How is brucellosis spread?

Humans are generally infected in one of three ways:

- Eating or drinking something that is contaminated with the bacteria,
- Breathing in the organism,
- Having the bacteria enter the body through skin wounds.

The most common way to be infected is by eating or drinking contaminated milk products. If the milk is not pasteurized, these bacteria can be spread to people who drink milk or eat cheeses made of. Breathing in the organism is not a common route of infection. And contamination of skin wounds may be a problem for people working in slaughterhouses or meat packing plants or for veterinarians.

Can brucellosis be spread from one person to another?

It is extremely rare that brucellosis will spread from direct person-to-person contact. Mothers who are breast-feeding may spread the infection to their infants. Sexual transmission has been reported as well. If the person at risk is treated for brucellosis,



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their risk of becoming infected will probably be eliminated within 3 days. Although it is rare, brucellosis may also spread through contaminated tissue transplants.

My dog has been diagnosed with brucellosis. Is that a risk for me?

The type of bacteria that causes brucellosis can infect dogs. In some cases dogs have spread the disease to humans, but the majority of dog infections do not result in human illness. Pet owners are not to be considered at risk.

Can brucellosis be treated?

Yes, but treatment can be difficult. Antibiotics can be prescribed for treatment. Depending on the timing of treatment and severity of illness, recovery may take a few weeks to several months. Less than 2% of all cases are fatal.