



ANTHRAX FACT SHEET

WHAT IS ANTHRAX?

Anthrax is an infection caused by a bacterial organism. Anthrax is rare in the United States, but can be found naturally in soil and commonly affects domestic and wild animals around the world. Anthrax is more common in developing countries and countries that do not have veterinary public health programs that routinely vaccinate animals against anthrax. Anthrax has also been formulated as a bioterrorism agent. After exposure, it can take anywhere from 1 day to more than 2 months to show the first signs of being ill.

HOW DO YOU GET ANTHRAX?

People get infected with anthrax by breathing in spores, eating food or drinking water that is contaminated with spores, or getting the spores in a cut or scrape in the skin. Anthrax is not contagious, which means you can't catch it like the cold or flu.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of anthrax depend on the type of infection:

- Cutaneous (via the skin); groups of small blisters that may itch, painless skin sore with a black center, and swelling around the sore.
- Inhalation (breathed in); fever, chills, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, confusion, cough, nausea, vomiting, sweats, headache, and body aches
- Gastrointestinal (swallowed); fever, chills, swelling of neck, sore throat, hoarseness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, red face and eyes, fainting, and swelling of stomach.
- Injection; fever, chills, small blisters that may itch, painless fore with a black center, swelling around the sore.

TREATMENT

There are several options for treating patients with anthrax, including antibiotics and antitoxin. It is important to get medical care as quickly as possible to have the best chances of a full recovery. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

Antibiotics can prevent anthrax from developing in people who have been exposed, but do not have symptoms. Discuss preventative options with your doctor. While there is a vaccine licensed to prevent anthrax, it is not typically available for the general public. Currently, FDA has not approved the vaccine for use after exposure for anyone. However, if there were ever an anthrax emergency, people who are exposed might be given the anthrax vaccine to help prevent disease.

DPHD EFFORTS:

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education. In addition, the DPHD coordinates with local and state agencies in the planning and response to emergencies.