

TULAREMIA

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Tularemia?

Tularemia is a potentially serious disease caused by a bacterium called Francisella tularensis. This illness occurs naturally in the United States and is often called rabbit fever. The bacterium is found in many animals, especially rodents, rabbits and hares. About 200 cases of Tularemia occur each year in the United States. Depending upon how a person is exposed, symptoms can include swollen lymph glands, skin and mouth ulcers, flu-like illness and pneumonia.

How is it spread?

People can get tularemia in many different ways, including:

- breathing in the bacteria, *Francisella tularensis*
- handling infected animal carcasses
- eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- being bitten by an infected insect such as ticks and deer flies

The bacterium that causes Tularemia is infectious. However, this disease is not spread from person to person. People who have the illness do not have to be isolated from others. Symptoms usually appear 3-5 days after exposure.

How is it treated?

Consult your doctor at the first sign of illness. Antibiotics are used to treat Tularemia, which must be taken according to the directions provided.

How can we prevent Tularemia?

Since Tularemia occurs naturally in many parts of the United States, you should take certain precautions to protect yourself.

- Wash your hands often, and always after handling animal carcasses.
- Cook your food thoroughly and make sure your water is from a safe source.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET or treat clothing with permethrin.
- Contact a veterinarian if your pets exhibit unusual behavior.

SYMPTOMS OF TULAREMIA

- sudden fever
- chills
- headaches
- diarrhea
- muscle aches
- joint pain
- dry cough
- progressive weakness

People can also develop pneumonia with chest pain, cough, and difficulty breathing.

Other symptoms of tularemia depend on how a person was exposed to the tularemia bacteria. These symptoms can include ulcers on the skin or mouth, swollen and painful lymph glands, swollen and painful eyes, and a sore throat.

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