

Tularemia FACTSHEET

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What is Tularemia?

Tularemia is a serious bacterial disease that occurs naturally in the United States. It can infect both animals and man. Although many wild and domestic animals have been infected, the rabbit, hare and rodents are most often involved in disease spread by a tick bite. The disease can affect the lymph system, gastrointestinal (stomach and intestines) tract, and the respiratory(lungs) tract.

Who gets Tularemia?

Tularemia occurs throughout North America. It can occur during any time of the year, but may occur more frequently in adults in the early winter during rabbit hunting season and in children during the summer when ticks and deer flies are abundant.

What are the symptoms of Tularemia?

The symptoms of tularemia could include:

- Sudden fever
- Chills
- Headaches
- Diarrhea
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Dry cough
- Progressive weakness

People can also develop pneumonia (severe lung infection) and develop chest pain, bloody sputum, and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms include ulcers or sores on the skin or mouth, swollen and painful lymph glands, swollen and painful eyes, and a sore throat.

How is Tularemia spread?

People can get tularemia in many different ways:

- Being bitten by an infected tick, deerfly, or other insect
- Handling infected animal carcasses
- Eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- Breathing in the germ that causes tularemia.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear three to five days after exposure to the germ that causes tularemia, but it can take as long as 14 days.

Is a person with Tularemia contagious?

No, a person with tularemia **does not** spread the disease to another person.

How is Tularemia treated?

A person with Tularemia is placed on antibiotics. It is important that the antibiotics are taken exactly as the doctor prescribed.

Is there a vaccine for Tularemia?

A vaccine for tularemia is under review by the Food and Drug Administration and is not currently available in the United States.

Can Tularemia be used as a weapon?

Tularemia could be used as a weapon. If it were used as a weapon it would most likely be sent through the air causing exposure by breathing in the germ.

How can Tularemia be prevented?

Tularemia can be prevented in the following ways:

- Use insect repellent containing DEET on your skin
- Treat clothing with a repellent to prevent insect bites
- Inspect your body for ticks after coming in from outdoors
- Wash your hands often using soap and warm water
- Use gloves when handling animal carcasses
- Be sure to cook food thoroughly, especially food gotten through hunting
- Make sure water is from a safe source
- Livestock and pets should be observed for any change in behavior, notify a veterinarian if they develop unusual signs or symptoms.
- Avoid areas infected with ticks and mosquitoes

Want more information?

Information about tularemia and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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