

BRUCELLOSIS

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a disease caused by several species of the *Brucella* bacterium that may affect various organs of the body, producing a wide variety of symptoms.

Most commonly, brucellosis occurs in people who work with livestock or in slaughterhouses or who consume unpasteurized (raw) dairy products.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

Symptoms are acute and characterized by:

- Fever
- Headache
- Weakness
- Profuse sweating/night sweats
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Depression
- Weight loss
- Generalized aching
- Fatigue

The disease may last days, months or occasionally a year or more if not adequately treated. The symptoms may reappear as relapses. While the time period is highly variable, symptoms usually appear within five days to five months.

How does brucellosis spread?

Brucella bacteria are found in cattle, swine, goats, sheep, dogs, bison, elk, caribou and some species of deer. The bacteria can be passed to humans:

- Through direct contact, if you have a break in your skin, and it comes in contact with an infected animal's tissue, blood, urine, vaginal discharge, aborted fetus or placenta
- Through ingesting unpasteurized milk and dairy products from infected animals
- Through airborne transmission, especially for individuals working in laboratories and slaughterhouses

How is brucellosis treated?

A combination of antibiotic treatments is given for a period of six weeks to prevent recurring infection. Depending on the timing of the treatment and severity of the illness, recovery may take a few weeks to several months.

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How can brucellosis be prevented?

- Wash hands thoroughly after touching animals
- Avoid unpasteurized milk products and undercooked meat products, especially when travelling to foreign countries
- Handle carcasses and products of potentially infected animals with care
- Exercise care in handling and disposal of placenta, discharges and fetus from an aborted animal
- Disinfect contaminated areas
- Ensure proper ventilation in slaughterhouses, meat processing plants and butcher shops
- Hunters and animal handlers should be properly educated, use gloves and protective clothing when handling animal carcasses, field dressing animals and burying the remains

