

# 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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1-877-464-9675

TTY 1-866-512-6228

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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

