

PNEUMONIC PLAGUE

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Pneumonic Plague?

*Pneumonic plague is one form of a severe infectious disease caused by the plague bacteria known as *Yersinia pestis*. The plague is transmitted by bites from infected fleas or direct contact with infectious body fluids or inhalation of infectious respiratory droplets.*

How is Pneumonic Plague spread?

Pneumonic plague occurs when plague bacteria infect the lungs and cause pneumonia. The lungs could also be infected by breathing in plague bacteria that are in respiratory droplets from a person or animal with plague pneumonia. Such exposures to plague bacteria could produce severe illness in 1 to 6 days.

How is Pneumonic Plague treated?

Antibiotics must be given immediately if plague is suspected. Several types of antibiotics are effective for treating pneumonic and other forms of plague, but must be administered within 24 hours of their first symptoms.

People who have had close contact with someone with pneumonic plague can greatly reduce their chance of becoming sick if they begin preventive antibiotic treatment promptly. Preventive antibiotic treatment consists of taking antibiotics for at least 7 days.

How is the spread of Pneumonic Plague prevented?

- Notify your local or state health department immediately if plague is suspected.
- Persons with the disease should be isolated and supported during the first 48 hours of antibiotic treatment.
- Identify individuals who have been in close contact with a patient with plague pneumonia. As noted above, close contacts can be protected from developing plague by receiving prompt antibiotic treatment and monitoring for signs of the disease.
- Persons having direct, close contact to someone with pneumonic plague should wear a tight-fitting disposable surgical mask and use other appropriate protection.
- No vaccine is available.

SYMPTOMS OF PNEUMONIC PLAGUE

- high fever
- chills
- cough
- headache
- shortness of breath
- blood tinged sputum
- muscle pain
- weakness

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