

Leptospirosis (Weil's disease)

Leptospirosis, also called Weil's disease, is an infection you can get from animals, soil or water. It's rare in the UK.

How you get leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is spread in the pee of infected animals, most commonly rats, mice, cows, pigs and dogs. You can get leptospirosis if:

- Soil or freshwater (such as water from a river, canal or lake) that contains infected pee gets in your mouth, eyes or a cut, usually during activities like kayaking, outdoor swimming or fishing.
- You touch an infected animal's blood or flesh, usually from working with animals or animal parts.

It's very rare to get leptospirosis from pets, other people or bites.

Symptoms of leptospirosis

Most people who get leptospirosis have no symptoms, or mild flu-like symptoms. But some people get seriously ill.

Symptoms of leptospirosis may include:

- High temperature.
- Headache.
- Body aches and pain.
- Tummy ache.
- Feeling sick or being sick.
- Diarrhoea.
- Redness in the white part of your eyes.
- Yellowing of the skin (which may be harder to see on black or brown skin) or white part of the eyes ([jaundice](#)).

Non-urgent advice: See a GP if:

You might have been exposed to infected pee, water, or soil and have:

- A high temperature, or you feel hot and shivery.
- A headache.
- Been feeling sick or being sick.

- Diarrhoea.
- Body aches and pains.
- Red eyes.
- A loss of appetite.

Urgent advice: Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111 if you have:

- Yellow skin (which may be harder to see on black or brown skin) and whites of the eyes ([jaundice](#))
- A rash
- Been unable to pee
- Swollen ankles, feet or hands
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

Treatment from a GP

Leptospirosis can often be treated by your GP. You'll usually be given antibiotic tablets to treat the infection. Most people recover in a few days or weeks.

It's important to finish the course of antibiotics, even if you start to feel better.

Take paracetamol or ibuprofen to relieve any aches, pains or a high temperature.

If you have severe symptoms, you may need to be treated in hospital.

How to avoid getting leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is rare in the UK. You have a higher chance of getting it if you do outdoor activities like water sports (especially while abroad in tropical areas), or you work with animals or animal parts.

There are things you can do to reduce your chances of getting leptospirosis.

Do

- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling animals or animal products.
- Clean any wounds as soon as possible.
- Cover any cuts and grazes with waterproof plasters.
- Wear protective clothing if you're at risk through your job.
- Shower as soon as possible if you've been in potentially infected water.
- Check your dog is vaccinated against leptospirosis (there is no vaccine for people).

Don't

- Do not touch water or soil that may contain animal pee.
- Do not touch dead animals with your bare hands.
- Do not drink water from places like rivers, canals or lakes – always boil or treat it first.

Downloaded from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/leptospirosis/>
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