



Fact Sheet

ANTHRAX: What You Need to Know

What Is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by bacteria that forms spores. Anthrax can make you sick by getting into your skin, lungs or digestive system. It can be deadly if untreated.

How Do You Get Anthrax?

People can get anthrax from touching or eating an infected animal or breathing in spores from an infected animal. Anthrax can also be used as a weapon. In 2001, 22 people got sick when anthrax was put into the mail.

You cannot catch anthrax from another person or spread it to others.

What Happens If I Get Anthrax?

People usually get sick within 1 to 7 days of exposure to anthrax, but if it is in your lungs it may take 42 days before you get sick.

It may cause your skin to blister or have sores. You may have a sore throat, fever, headache, cough and breathing problems.

You will need to be treated with medicine because anthrax can cause serious illness or death.

How Is Anthrax Treated?

There is no way to test for anthrax before you get sick.

Antibiotics are used to treat all types of anthrax.

Health-care workers will give you medicine (doxycycline or ciprofloxacin). This medicine can help prevent an anthrax infection, even if you don't feel sick.

You may have to take this medicine for 60 days. The medicine can cause nausea, diarrhea, headache or a yeast infection (women only), but it is important that you keep taking the medicine until it is gone.

Children have to take different amounts of the medicine than adults. Health-care workers have information on how to give medicine to children and babies.