

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Brucellosis

(Undulant fever, Malta fever, Mediterranean fever)

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is an illness characterized by fever, night sweats, extreme tiredness, anorexia (loss of appetite), weight loss, headache, and arthralgia (pain in the joints). It is caused by an infection with a bacteria of one of the *Brucella* species. The infection occurs worldwide, and is most common in the Mediterranean countries of Europe and Africa, the Middle East, India, central Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America.

Who gets brucellosis?

Anyone can get brucellosis if they are infected with a bacteria of one of the *Brucella* species. Persons at highest risk for brucellosis are those who work with animals that are infected, such as veterinarians and ranchers, and persons who consume raw milk or cheeses made with raw milk. Brucellosis may also be transmitted to humans if they are inadvertently exposed to live brucellosis vaccine by a needlestick or other accident.

How is brucellosis spread?

Brucellosis is spread to humans through contact with tissues or bodily fluids of animals who are infected with *Brucella* bacteria. Animals that may be infected with *Brucella* bacteria include cattle, swine, goats and sheep. Infections may also be found in bison, elk, caribou and some species of deer. A small percentage of dogs and coyotes are infected with *Brucella*.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

Brucellosis is characterized by a fever which may be continuous, intermittent or irregular. Some other

possible symptoms include headache, weakness, sweating, chills, arthralgia (pain in the joints), depression, weight loss and generalized aching. This disease may last for days, months, or as long as a year if untreated.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Although the time from exposure to appearance of symptoms is highly variable, 1-2 months is common.

How is brucellosis diagnosed?

The laboratory criteria for diagnosis include:

- The isolation of bacteria from the *Brucella* family from a bacterial culture, or
- An increase over time in antibodies in the blood that are specific for *Brucella*, or
- The demonstration by immunofluorescence of bacteria from the *Brucella* family

What is the treatment for brucellosis?

Doctors can prescribe antibiotics for brucellosis.

How can brucellosis be prevented?

The most important steps to prevent brucellosis in humans are those directed at controlling brucellosis in animals. The Brucellosis Eradication Program was established to eradicate the disease from cattle in the United States. From 1956 to 1998, the number of known brucellosis-affected herds decreased from 124,000 to 15.

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While brucellosis is rare in the United States, one step everyone can take to prevent possible exposure is to avoid consuming raw milk or cheeses made with raw milk.

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



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Updated 6-06