

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Psittacosis (Ornithosis)

What is psittacosis?

Psittacosis is an illness characterized by fever, chills, headache, rash, photophobia (the avoidance of light), cough and muscle aches. It is caused by an infection with a bacterium known as *Chlamydia psittaci*.

Who gets psittacosis?

Anyone can get psittacosis if they are infected with the *C. psittaci* bacteria, and the most common source of these bacteria is infected birds. Pet birds of the psittacine family (specifically parakeets, parrots and lovebirds) are the most common birds to be infected, but other birds such as poultry, pigeons, canaries and sea birds may also be infected. Birds who are infected may appear healthy or sick.

How is psittacosis spread?

Humans become infected with psittacosis when they inhale *C. psittaci* bacteria that are present in dried bird droppings, feather dust or other secretions of infected birds. Person-to-person spread of psittacosis is very unlikely.

What are the symptoms of psittacosis?

The symptoms include fever, chills, headache, rash, photophobia, muscle aches and either upper or lower respiratory tract disease. Pneumonia is common with psittacosis.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear from one to four weeks after exposure.

How is psittacosis diagnosed?

Psittacosis is diagnosed through various laboratory tests.

What is the treatment for psittacosis?

Doctors can prescribe antibiotics for psittacosis.

How can psittacosis be prevented?

To prevent psittacosis in humans, it is necessary to prevent the exposure of humans to infected birds. Pet birds (as well as any other pet) should only be purchased from reputable pet stores.

Where can I get more information?

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

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Case definitions for infectious conditions under public health surveillance. MMWR 1997; 46 (No. RR-10):27.



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