

Brucellosis

(Also called Undulant fever, Malta fever, Mediterranean fever)

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that may affect various organs of the body, producing a wide variety of symptoms.

Who gets brucellosis?

Although everyone is susceptible and may get the disease if exposed to the *Brucella* bacteria, brucellosis occurs most often in people who work with livestock or in slaughterhouses, or who consume unpasteurized dairy products.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of brucellosis may include fever, headache, weakness, profuse sweating, chills, joint pain, depression, weight loss, generalized aching and fatigue. The disease may last days, months or occasionally a year or more if not adequately treated. The symptoms may reappear as relapses.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The time period is highly variable, but symptoms usually appear within five to 60 days.

How does it spread?

Brucella bacteria are found in cattle, swine, goats, sheep, dogs, bison, elk, caribou and some species of deer. The bacteria can be passed to humans in several ways:

- Through direct contact, if you have a break in your skin, and it comes in contact with an infected animal's tissue, blood, urine, vaginal discharge, aborted fetus, or placenta
- Through ingesting unpasteurized milk and dairy products from infected animals
- Through airborne transmission, which can be a possibility for people working in laboratories and slaughterhouses

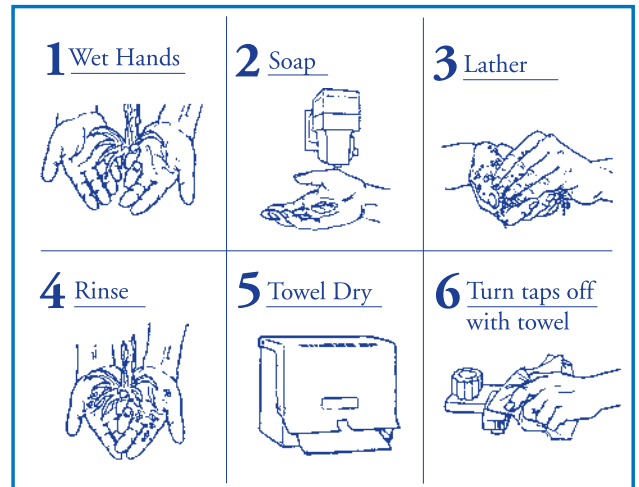
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York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca



How do you prevent brucellosis?

Brucellosis can be prevented through the following measures:

- Wash hands thoroughly after touching animals (see diagram to the right)
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products
- Handle carcasses and products of potentially infected animals with care
- Exercise care in handling and disposal of placenta, discharges and fetus from an aborted animal
- Disinfect contaminated areas
- Ensure proper ventilation in slaughterhouses, meat processing plants and butcher shops
- When hunting, use gloves and protective clothing when dressing animals and bury the remains properly



What is the treatment?

A combination of antibiotic treatments is given for a period of six weeks to prevent recurring infection. Depending on the timing of the treatment and severity of the illness, recovery may take a few weeks to several months.

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