

Tularemia



What is Tularemia?

Tularemia is a potentially serious illness that occurs naturally in the rural Central and Western United States. It is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* found in animals (especially rodents, rabbits, and hares).

Typically, people become infected through the bite of infected insects (most commonly, ticks and deerflies), by handling infected sick or dead animals, by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, or by inhaling airborne bacteria.

What are the symptoms of Tularemia?

Symptoms of tularemia may vary depending on how they are exposed. They may include:

- sudden fever
- chills
- headaches
- diarrhea
- muscle aches
- joint pain
- dry cough
- progressive weakness

Other possible symptoms include skin ulcers, swollen and painful lymph glands, inflamed eyes, sore throat, mouth sores, or diarrhea. People can also catch pneumonia and develop chest pain, bloody sputum and can have trouble breathing and even sometimes stop breathing.

Symptoms usually appear 3 to 5 days after exposure to the bacteria, but can take as long as 14 days.

How is Tularemia treated?

If you suspect you were exposed to tularemia bacteria, see a doctor quickly. A healthcare worker collects specimens, such as blood or sputum, for testing in a diagnostic or reference laboratory. Several types of antibiotics have been effective in treating tularemia infections. Your doctor will most likely prescribe one. The antibiotics must be taken according to directions to ensure the best possible result.

How does Tularemia spread?

People can get tularemia many different ways:

- being bitten by an infected tick, deerfly or other insect
- handling infected animal carcasses
- eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- breathing in the bacteria, *F. tularensis*

Tularemia is not known to be spread from person to person.

How can I prevent Tularemia?

Use insect repellent containing DEET on your skin, or treat clothing with repellent containing permethrin, to prevent insect bites. Wash your hands often, using soap and warm water, especially after handling animal carcasses. Be sure to cook your food thoroughly and that your water is from a safe source.

Note any change in the behavior of your pets (especially rodents, rabbits, and hares) or livestock, and consult a veterinarian if they develop unusual symptoms.

Source: www.cdc.gov

District Health Department #10

Crawford Co 989-348-7800	Kalkaska Co 231-258-8669	Lake Co 231-745-4663
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