



South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

1020 Washington Street N • Twin Falls, ID 83301
(208) 737-5900

PLAGUE (*Yersinia pestis*) AS A BIOTERRORISM EVENT

What is plague?

The bacteria (germs) that cause plague are normally spread to humans by infected fleas. If the bacteria were intentionally released into the air, they could be inhaled (breathed) into your lungs and cause severe infection such as pneumonia.

Can plague be spread person-to-person?

The infection is spread from person-to-person by close contact (within 3 feet) of an infected person who coughs the bacteria from their lungs into the air.

What are the symptoms of infection?

The symptoms include sudden onset of high fever, chills, headache, extreme fatigue, muscle aches, and a cough that may be bloody.

How soon will symptoms develop (incubation period)?

The symptoms will start within 1 to 6 days after you breathe the bacteria into your lungs.

How will I know if I was exposed to the bacteria?

That will depend on how the bacteria was released into the air, where the bacteria were released, and where you were in relation to the release site. The further away you were from the release site, the less likely it will be that you were exposed. If you have close contact (within 3 feet) of an infected person, a health care provider will determine if you have been exposed.

How is the infection treated?

If you have the infection, a health care provider will give you an antibiotic.

How long should I take the antibiotic?

The antibiotic needs to be taken as directed. The dose and the number of treatment days will differ depending on the antibiotic prescribed. If you develop side effects (reaction) to the antibiotic, call your health care provider immediately.

What should I do if I develop symptoms of infection while I am taking the antibiotic?

Take your temperature daily. If you have a fever greater than 100.4 F or if you develop flu-like symptoms (cough, fatigue, muscle aches) or a headache, go immediately to the nearest emergency medical service or hospital.

What should I do if I do not have symptoms?

If you do not have symptoms of the infection, you should continue with your routine daily activities. Please do not go to the hospital emergency room unless you are experiencing the symptoms of infection.

Where can I get more information?

You can call South Central Public Health District at 734-5900 ext. 239.