

WARNING!



WEILS DISEASE/LEPTOSPIROSIS

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that can be passed from animals to humans. It infects a variety of wild and domestic animals, especially rats, which can spread the pathogen in their urine.

Human infection occurs by direct or indirect contact with affected urine, tissues, or secretions expose to water or an environment contaminated by infected animal urine, and has been associated with recreational activities such as canoeing, windsurfing, swimming in lakes and rivers, pot holing and fishing. Pathogens enter the body through cut or damaged skin, but may also pass across damaged or intact mucous membranes, and the eyes.

What are the symptoms?

In humans leptospirosis causes a wide range of symptoms, although some infected people appear healthy. Onset usually involves a flu-like illness, with a severe headache, chills, muscle aches and vomiting. In some cases, an immune phase may occur with a return of fever, jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or a rash. In more severe cases there may be failure of some organs, e.g. the kidneys, or meningitis. Generally, cases will recover within two to six weeks but some may take up to three months. After infection, immunity develops against the infecting strain, but this may not fully protect against infection with unrelated strains.

How soon after the exposure do symptoms occur?

Typically, symptoms develop seven to fourteen days after infection, though rarely the incubation period can be as short as two to three days or as long as thirty days.

How is Leptospirosis treated?

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics such as penicillin or doxycycline, which should be given early in the course of the disease. Intravenous antibiotics may be needed for people with more severe symptoms.

Can Leptospirosis be prevented?

Ways to avoid contracting Weil's disease are:

- Avoid capsizing or "rolling" in stagnant or slow moving water, particularly where rat infestation is obvious.
- Wash or shower after canoeing.
- Cover minor cuts and scratches with waterproof plasters before getting in your boat.
- Wear trainers or wetsuit boots to avoid cutting your feet.
- If you have flu-like symptoms after canoeing go to your GP and tell him you are a canoeist.

IN SUMMARY:

We don't want you to get sick!

Please wash your face and hands after participating in today's activities.

If you have any open cuts, please ensure that these are covered with an Elastoplast or dressing.

If you feel ill over the next few weeks, please tell your GP you have been participating in water based activities.