



# PUBLIC FACT SHEET

## ANTHRAX

### What is anthrax?

Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by spore-forming bacteria. There are three main forms of anthrax: skin (cutaneous), lung (inhalation), and intestinal.

### Who can get anthrax?

Anthrax is uncommon in the United States. Occasionally, however, it can infect animals such as cattle, as well as humans.

### How is anthrax spread?

Anthrax can be spread through the following ways:

- Skin (cutaneous)
  - contact with:
    - infected animals, or their hair, wool or hide
    - products made from infected animals
    - contaminated soil
- Lung (inhalation)
  - breathing air contaminated with anthrax spores
- Intestinal
  - eating under cooked meat from contaminated animals

Exposure can also occur through a bioterrorist event.

Direct person to person transmission of anthrax rarely, if ever, occurs.

### What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms of anthrax vary depending on how the disease was contracted, and usually occur within seven days.

*Skin (cutaneous):* Appears as an itchy, pimple like bump that may contain fluid. In 1 to 2 days the bump changes into a skin ulcer, with a black center. The area may be red, swollen, and often painless.

*Lung (inhalation):* Initial symptoms may be that of a common cold. After a few days, the symptoms may develop into severe breathing problems. Inhalation anthrax often results in death if not treated early.

*Intestinal:* Initial symptoms may include nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, and fever which may be followed by lower stomach pain, vomiting of blood, and severe diarrhea.

### How is anthrax diagnosed?

Anthrax can be diagnosed from blood, skin lesions, or respiratory discharge.

### What is the treatment for anthrax?

In the early stage of the disease doctors can prescribe effective antibiotics for treatment. However, if left untreated the disease can lead to death.

If you have been in contact with any contaminated products and have the above symptoms, please see your doctor immediately.

### For more information on anthrax contact:

Ottawa County Health Department  
[www.miOttawa.org](http://www.miOttawa.org)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax/)  
Phone: (888) 246-2675