

Brucellosis in Dogs Fact Sheet

1. **My dog has been diagnosed with brucellosis. Is that a risk for me?**
 - a. Brucellosis in dogs is caused by the *Brucella canis* bacteria which can occasionally be transmitted from dogs to humans, but most of the time dog infections do not result in human illness.
 - b. Veterinarians are considered to be at a higher risk of infection, because they may be professionally exposed to the aborted fetuses, blood, placenta, semen, tissues, urine, or vaginal discharges of infected dogs.
 - c. Pet owners are considered to be at lower risk of infection since they are less likely to come into contact with infected material. However, pet owners will have a slight risk.
 - d. People with weakened immune systems (for example, cancer patients, HIV-infected individuals, transplantation patients, people on certain medications) should not handle dogs known to be infected with *Brucella canis*.
 - e. Person-to-person spread of brucellosis is extremely rare.
2. **How is brucellosis transmitted?**
 - a. Brucella bacteria are usually transmitted through skin abrasions when humans come into contact with infected materials or animals.
 - b. The bacteria can also be spread through the air; for example, in dog kennels.
3. **What is the incubation period for brucellosis?** After someone is exposed to brucellosis, the incubation period (how long it takes to become ill) can be highly variable, ranging from 5 to 60 days. Occasionally, illness may not occur until several months after exposure.
4. **What are the symptoms of human brucellosis and can brucellosis be treated?**
 - a. Human brucellosis may present as a nonspecific illness with fever that resembles the flu.
 - b. Common signs and symptoms are irregular fever, headache, profound fatigue, chills, sweating, lack of appetite, weight loss, depression, joint and muscle pain.
 - c. The duration of illness can last from several days to a year or longer without adequate treatment.
 - d. Brucellosis in humans can be treated with antibiotics; however, relapses can be seen months after the initial symptoms, even in previously carefully treated cases.

- e. Brucellosis is rarely fatal.

5. How is brucellosis diagnosed?

- a. Brucellosis is diagnosed by collecting blood or bone marrow samples and looking for the presence of *Brucella canis*.
- b. Blood tests can also be done to detect the body's immune response (antibodies) against the bacteria. If this method is used, two separate blood samples should be collected two weeks apart.

6. Is treatment for my dog possible?

- a. Contact your veterinarian and provide all available information.
- b. *Brucella canis* may be cleared from the dog within the first few days of antibiotic treatment; however sometimes it can take weeks for the treatment to be fully effective.
- c. Retesting is required to ensure effective treatment.
- d. It is important to closely follow your veterinarian's instructions.

7. For more information on Canine Brucellosis:

<http://www.cdc.gov/brucellosis/veterinarians/dogs.html>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.