

Plague

Plague is a bacterium (germ) that is inhaled (breathed in) into people's lungs. It causes severe pneumonia.

It may also be spread to humans through the bite of an infected flea.

Is plague spread from person-to-person?

Yes. This infection is spread from person-to-person by close contact (within three feet) of an infected person who coughs, spreading the germ into the air.

How will I know if I was exposed to the plague germ?

Exposure depends on how the germ was released into the air, where the germ was released, and where you were relative to the release site. The further away you were, the less likely it will be that you have been exposed. If you have close contact with an infected person (within three feet), the local health department may determine that you have been exposed.

How soon will symptoms develop (incubation period)?

Symptoms may start within one to six days after you have breathed the germ into your lungs.

What are the symptoms of plague?

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

How is the plague treated?

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

How is the plague prevented?

If the local health department determines that you have been exposed to the germ, you will be offered an antibiotic. Even if you take the antibiotic, you may develop the infection. Take your temperature daily. If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees or flu-like symptoms or bloody cough while you are taking the antibiotic, you should go to the hospital emergency room or nearest emergency service center immediately.

How long should I take the antibiotic?

It is extremely important that you take the antibiotic exactly as directed. The dose and number of treatment days will differ depending on the antibiotic prescribed. If you develop side effects to the antibiotic, call your health care provider immediately. Do not give your antibiotic to another person.

What should I do if I do not have symptoms?

You should continue with your daily activities. Do not go to the hospital emergency room unless you are sick. The local health officer may suggest that you wear a mask over your nose and mouth if you go to public places.

**Kalamazoo County Public Health
Emergency Information Line:
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Visit our website at www.kalcounty.com

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