

# Tularemia

**Tularemia, also known as “rabbit fever,” is an infection caused by a bacterium that is usually found in several types of wild animals (rabbits, voles, muskrats, beavers and others).**

## **Is tularemia spread from person to person?**

No. Tularemia can be spread by aerosol (inhaled), by handling infected animals with bare hands, by flea and tick bites, or by drinking contaminated water. If the germ were intentionally released (bioterrorism) into the air, it would most likely be inhaled into your lungs causing a severe infection (pneumonia).

## **How soon will symptoms develop (incubation period) if I have been infected?**

Symptoms of tularemia usually develop within three to six days after exposure to the germ. It can be as short as one day or as long as 21 days depending on how close you were to the site where the germ was released into the air. Not all persons exposed to the germ will develop the infection.

## **Does tularemia occur naturally?**

Yes. Tularemia is a widespread disease in animals. About 200 human cases are reported each year in the U.S. Most cases occur in the south-central and western states.

## **Can tularemia be used as a bioterrorism agent?**

The bacteria that causes tularemia is highly infectious. A small number (10-50 or so organisms) can cause disease. The bacteria could be isolated and grown in quantity in a laboratory, although manufacturing an effective aerosol weapon would require considerable sophistication.

## **What are the symptoms of tularemia infection?**

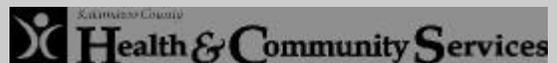
Symptoms of tularemia pneumonia are generally flu-like and may include a sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, tiredness, sore muscles, loss of appetite, cough, and chest pain. Vomiting, stomach pain and watery diarrhea may also develop.

## **How is tularemia infection treated?**

If you have symptoms of the infection your health care provider will give you antibiotics.

## **How is tularemia prevented?**

Antibiotics to prevent disease may be given by your health care provider and are most effective if started within 24 hours after exposure to the germ.



3299 Gull Road; PO Box 42  
Nazareth, MI 49074-0042  
Phone: 269-373-5200 Fax: 269-373-5363  
Web: [www.kalcounty.com](http://www.kalcounty.com)

**Kalamazoo County Public Health  
Emergency Information Line:  
269-373-5300**