

Leptospirosis (Weil's disease)

Leptospirosis, also called Weil's disease, is an infection you can get from animals, soil, or water. It is rare in the UK.

How you get leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is spread in the urine of infected animals, most commonly rats, mice, cows, pigs, and dogs.

You can get leptospirosis if:

- soil or freshwater (such as water from a river, canal, or lake) that contains infected urine gets in your mouth, eyes, or a cut, usually during activities like kayaking, outdoor swimming, or fishing
- you touch an infected animal's blood or flesh, usually from working with animals or animal parts

It's very rare to get leptospirosis from pets, other people, or bites.

Symptoms of leptospirosis

Most people who get leptospirosis have no symptoms, or mild flu-like symptoms. But some people get seriously ill.

Symptoms of leptospirosis may include:

- high temperature
- headache
- body aches and pain
- tummy ache
- feeling sick or being sick
- diarrhoea
- redness in the white part of your eyes
- yellowing of the skin (which may be harder to see on black or brown skin) or white part of the eyes (jaundice)

See a doctor if you think you may have leptospirosis and experience symptoms.

If you experience any of the following, make an urgent GP appointment or call 111:

- yellow skin (which may be harder to see on black or brown skin) and whites of the eyes (jaundice)
- a rash
- been unable to pee.
- swollen ankles, feet, or hands
- chest pain
- shortness of breath

Measures you can take to avoid getting leptospirosis.

- wash your hands with soap and water after handling animals or animal products.
- clean any wounds as soon as possible.
- cover any cuts and grazes with waterproof plasters.
- wear protective clothing if you're at risk through your job.
- shower as soon as possible if you've been in potentially infected water.