

Plague

What is Plague?

Plague is a disease caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis* and is carried by fleas that infect rodents.

Plague is rare in the United States, but can occur in warmer months most often in the Southwest

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms vary by exposure type

Bubonic Plague:

- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Weakness
- Swollen, tender and painful lymph nodes (buboes)

Septicemic plague

- Fever
- Chills
- Extreme weakness
- Abdominal pain
- Shock
- Bleeding into the skin and other organs

Pneumonic Plague:

- Fever
- Headache
- Weakens
- Rapidly developing pneumonia
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Cough
- Bloody/water mucus

Pneumonic plague can lead to respiratory failure and shock and is the most serious form of the disease

Transmission (How it spreads)

The bite of an infected flea

Direct contact with contaminated blood or tissue

Infectious droplets (pneumonic plague)

Diagnosis and Treatment

Laboratory tests on blood and spinal fluid

If recognized quickly, antibiotics are available for treatment

Prevention:

- Avoid contact with animals such as mice, rats, prairie dogs, and squirrels. Wear gloves when handling
- Prevent rodent access to foods, garbage, and refuse
- Use appropriate insect (flea) repellent when camping where plague is common
- Provide flea treatments to your pets

Who is at Risk?

Everyone; higher risk groups include:

- Laboratory personnel who work with rodents
- Anyone who is exposed to infected rodents

If you have symptoms, call your healthcare provider

Report cases to the Riley County Health Department by calling the Disease Investigation Line: 785-317-0474

Plague is a reportable disease in the state of Kansas. All cases must be reported to KDHE via the Epi Hotline:
877-427-7317