

Traveller Information Sheets



Leptospirosis

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that affects humans and animals. It occurs worldwide, but is most prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions. The bacteria are shed in the urine of infected animals, and make their way into humans via cuts, or in some cases drinking contaminated water.

Who is at risk of Leptospirosis?

Travellers exposed to natural disasters such as typhoons or flooding, or white water rafting and swimming in areas of risk are at risk.

What are the symptoms of Leptospirosis?

- Flu-like illness
- High fever
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Redness of the eyes
- Abdominal pain
- Jaundice
- Haemorrhages in the skin and mucous membranes
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Rash

5-15% of untreated cases can progress to a more severe and potentially fatal stage.

Is there a vaccination?

Currently there is no vaccination.

What is the treatment?

The treatment is a course of antibiotics; this should be started as soon as possible.

How can Leptospirosis be prevented?

- Covering all cuts and wounds with waterproof dressings
- Avoiding water exposure in areas of risk
- Washing after exposure to urine or soil potentially contaminated with Leptospirosis
- Consuming clean drinking water
- Maintaining hygienic conditions if exposed to animals.

Reference

World health Organisation, 2014, Geneva Switzerland, viewed 15th April 2014, <<http://www.who.int/topics/leptospirosis/en/>>

World Health Organisation: Western Pacific Region, 2012, Manilla Philippines, viewed 15th April 2014, <http://www.wpro.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs_13082012_leptospirosis/en/>

Centres for disease control and prevention, 2012, Atlanta GA, viewed 15th April 2014, <<http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/infection/index.html>>