



Anthrax Fact Sheet

Epidemiology Program

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What is anthrax?

It is an infectious disease caused by a type of bacteria, which forms spores, tiny particles like those that form mold. These spores can infect humans who are exposed to them by contact with open skin, by being inhaled into the lungs, or by being swallowed into the stomach. Signs of the disease usually occur within seven (7) days of exposure. *Person to person contact does not spread anthrax.*

What are the signs of anthrax exposure?

Signs of anthrax exposure may include flu-like symptoms such as fever, shortness of breath, cough, feeling tired or achy, or vomiting. If these signs are present after anthrax exposure is confirmed, doctors will prescribe antibiotics.

Is there a treatment for anthrax?

It is very important that antibiotics be started early for treatment of anthrax caused by inhaling the spores. If left untreated, the disease can be fatal. The patient should be admitted to the hospital and started on IV antibiotics. There is no need to treat the contacts of a person with anthrax unless the contacts were also exposed to the anthrax spores. Antibiotics should be given as soon as possible after potential exposure before any symptoms appear.

Is anthrax vaccine available?

The vaccine is not recommended for the general public or health care providers.