

# Plague

## Personal Health Fact Sheet

### ***What is Plague?***

*Plague is an acute disease caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, which is usually transmitted by infected fleas, resulting in lymph and blood infections (bubonic and septicemia plague).*

### **How is it spread?**

Plague is normally transmitted from an infected rodent to humans by infected fleas. Bioterrorism-related outbreaks are likely to be transmitted through use of an aerosol, causing a pulmonary disease, pneumonic plague. Persons with pneumonic plague may have productive coughs that contain particles of infectious bacteria, which may serve as the source of continued transmission.

### **How is it treated?**

- Doxycycline is recommended after exposure to plague, with Ciprofloxacin the second choice of antibiotic. Prophylaxis (treatment prevention) should continue for seven days.
- Current antibiotic therapy is effective against diagnosed cases of plague.

### **How can we prevent Plague?**

The use of a surgical type mask for patient care and placement in a private room should be implemented until the patient has completed 72 hours of antibiotic therapy.

In the event of an intentional release of plague into an area, it is possible that local fleas and rodents could become infected, thereby initiating a cycle of endemic disease. To prevent this spreading, environmental controls would be required.

### **SYMPTOMS OF Plague**

- ▶ Pneumonic plague has an incubation period of 1-3 days with these symptoms:
  - High fever
  - Chills
  - Headache
  - Bloody cough/sputum
- Bubonic plague has an incubation period of 2-10 days with these symptoms:
  - Malaise (feeling of illness or depression)
  - High fever
  - Tender lymph nodes



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