

BACKGROUND

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by *leptospira* bacteria that can be passed from infected animals to humans. Infection can cause a wide range of illness, including kidney and liver failure, or no illness at all. In New York City (NYC), rats are the main source of human infections.

HOW IT IS SPREAD

Leptospira bacteria are found in the urine of infected animals. When they pee, the bacteria can contaminate soil and water and can survive for several weeks in moist, warm areas. The bacteria can enter your body if urine, or contaminated water or soil, comes in contact with open cuts or wounds, your eyes, nose or mouth.

FACTORS THAT PUT A PERSON AT RISK FOR EXPOSURE IN NYC

Rats are the main source of the bacteria that cause leptospirosis in NYC. You are at risk of infection if you live or work in an area with a severe rat infestation or that is contaminated with rat urine.

TIPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE IN AREAS WHERE RATS ARE PRESENT

Workplace and Home

- Take action to prevent rats at home or work. For tips, visit nyc.gov/health and search **rat prevention tips**.
- Do not walk in floodwaters or any water that may be contaminated by animal urine.
- Wash floors and surfaces with a sanitizing solution like bleach (one-part household bleach and 10 parts water) to kill the bacteria.

Personal

- Wash hands regularly with soap and water and especially after removing Personal Protective Equipment (see below) and clothing.
- Wash or shower after exposure to soil or water that may be contaminated by rat urine.
- Cover cuts or scratches with waterproof bandages or other coverings that keep out water.
- Wear waterproof protective clothing, gloves, closed shoes or boots near water or wet soil that may be contaminated by rat urine.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Use PPE to create a barrier to avoid exposure to urine or urine-contaminated water and soil. When working in risky environments, PPE should be waterproof and may include:

- Plastic aprons and gloves for handling urine-contaminated soil or trash.
- Goggles and face shields when using a high-pressure hose to protect your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Replace disposable, one-time PPE and footwear that becomes damaged or may permit leakage of water or moisture. Do not reuse PPE after it has become dirty, contaminated or exposed to rat urine.