

# Brucellosis

## The disease

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria of the genus *Brucella*. The bacteria are primarily passed among animals, sheep, goats, cattle, deer, elk, pigs, dogs, and other animals. Only 100-200 cases of brucellosis are reported in the United States each year. The bacteria is found worldwide, but is more common in countries that do not have standardized and effective public health and domestic animal health programs.

## Cause

The most common cause is by eating or drinking contaminated milk products but may also occur through:

- Eating or drinking contaminated food items
- Breathing in the organism
- Bacteria entering through skin wounds

## Symptoms

- Fever
- Profuse sweating
- Headaches
- Back pains
- Physical weakness

Severe infections of the central nervous system or lining of the heart may occur. Brucellosis can also cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms that include recurrent fevers, joint pain and fatigue.

## The risk

**Direct person-to-person spread is very rare.** Mothers who are breast-feeding may transmit the infection to babies. Sexual transmission has also been reported.

The mortality rate of brucellosis is low, less than 2%. Death is usually accompanied by endocarditis, an inflammation of the inside lining of the heart and valves.

## Treatment

**Early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics is paramount.**