



# Anthrax

## The disease

Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by a spore forming bacteria. Anthrax most commonly occurs in warm-blooded animals but can affect humans.

## The forms

- Inhalation Anthrax: Caused by breathing in spores, no cases in United States since 1978 of naturally occurring origin. Intentional cases began in October 4, 2001.
- Cutaneous Anthrax: Caused by spores entering the body through a wound. Most common form of naturally occurring anthrax in humans.
- Gastrointestinal Anthrax: Caused by Eating of contaminated food or water

## Symptoms of Inhalational Anthrax

The initial symptoms resemble a common cold. After several days the symptoms may progress to severe breathing problems and shock. Death usually results 1-2 days after the onset of the acute symptoms.

## The risk

Anthrax can be found globally. Those that are at most risk are the countries that have fewer standardized public health programs.

Direct person-to-person spread of anthrax does not usually occur.

In an average year, the chance that any one individual in the United States will contract anthrax is extremely low (about one in about 300 million).

## Treatment

**Early diagnosis of anthrax is important.**

**Early treatment with antibiotics is paramount.**