

# **ANTHRAX—FACT SHEET**

## **What is anthrax?**

Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by bacteria called *Bacillus anthracis*. There are several different forms of anthrax: pulmonary, cutaneous and gastrointestinal.

## **How would I contract anthrax?**

Anthrax can be transmitted in three ways:

- By breathing in particles containing anthrax (pulmonary or inhalational)
- By direct contact between anthrax spores and non-intact skin (cutaneous)
- By ingesting something contaminated with anthrax (gastrointestinal)

## **Can I give anthrax to anyone else?**

Anthrax is not contagious from person-to-person, unless you touch an anthrax skin ulcer with your bare hands. Wear gloves at all times if caring for a cutaneous (skin) lesion.

## **What are the symptoms of anthrax?**

Initial symptoms of pulmonary anthrax resemble the flu (fever, chills, nausea, diarrhea, chest pain or cough). People with pulmonary anthrax may get better for a few days and then develop shock. Cutaneous anthrax presents as blisters that turn into painless ulcers. Gastrointestinal anthrax presents with nausea, vomiting, fever and severe diarrhea.

## **What is the treatment for anthrax?**

The treatment of anthrax involves administering antibiotics early in the infection.

## **General recommendations for home care**

- Hand washing is an important step to protect yourself and others. Antimicrobial soaps such as Dial or Lever 2000 are good choices. If liquid soap is used, do not refill a partially emptied container. If water is not available, an alcohol product or waterless alcohol wash can be used.
- Surfaces that are contaminated should be cleaned with one part bleach to nine parts water. Contaminated surfaces include those on bed rails, toilets, sinks and any other items contaminated with body secretions.
- Travel is allowed only if medically necessary until the patient is well. There is no need for the patient to wear a mask when traveling.
- Trash can be disposed of in the regular household trash.
- Linens can be laundered as usual, using hot, soapy water.
- Dishes and silverware can be washed in hot water or in the dishwasher.
- Personal items such as toothbrushes, razors or drinking cups should never be shared.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your physician or local health department.