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.

BOTULISM-FACT SHEET

What is botulism?

Botulism is a muscle-paralyzing disease caused by a toxin made from a bacterium called *Clostridium botulinum*.

How do I contract botulism?

Botulism can be contracted by ingesting contaminated food or inhaling contaminated particles. In adults, food-borne botulism is most common. Botulism is not spread from person-to-person.

What are the symptoms of botulism?

Food-borne botulism causes gastrointestinal symptoms. Blurred vision, drooping eyelids, difficulty swallowing and muscle weakness can be found in patients with either type of botulism. In addition, an individual infected with botulism can experience progressive paralysis and respiratory failure.

What is the treatment?

The primary treatment for both types of botulism is supportive care in a hospital setting. Additionally, an antitoxin is available from the CDC.

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.

PLAGUE—FACT SHEET

What is plague?

Plague is an infectious disease of animals and humans caused by a bacterium called Yersinia pestis.

How do I contract the plague?

Plague is usually transmitted to humans through fleabites or direct exposure to infected tissue or respiratory droplets. Plague is transmitted from person-to-person. If diagnosed with plague, an individual is placed on "droplet precautions," meaning caregivers must wear a surgical mask when within three feet of the patient until he or she has been on antibiotics for three days. After three days of treatment, the individual is no longer infectious to others.

What are the symptoms of the plague?

The plague causes fever, chills, headache, bloody sputum, shortness of breath and swollen lymph nodes. In addition, pneumonia may develop if plague is left untreated.

What is the treatment for plague?

Plague is primarily treated with antibiotics and supportive care in a hospital setting.

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 should be limited to what is medically necessary until the patient has taken antibiotics for three days. If travel is necessary prior to the completion of antibiotics, the patient should travel with a surgical mask covering both the nose and mouth.
- Patients with plague should not be housed with others who are immunocompromised, including infants, the elderly, those with a debilitating illness such as cancer or HIV, and those with chronic illness treated with steroids.
- Trash should be placed in a receptacle as soon as possible. You should wash your hands immediately, and gloves should be worn to handle any contaminated items.
- Linens can be laundered as usual, using hot, soapy water.
- Dishes and silverware should be washed in a solution of bleach and hot water.
- Personal items such as toothbrushes, razors or drinking cups should never be shared.

SMALLPOX—FACT SHEET

What is smallpox?

Smallpox is an illness caused by the variola virus.

How would I contract smallpox?

Smallpox is spread from one person to another by infected saliva droplets, and has an incubation period of seven to 17 days. Persons with smallpox are most infectious during the first week, including contact with the fluid in lesions. Overall, a person with smallpox is contagious beginning when the rash starts and ending when all lesions have scabbed over and all scabs have fallen off. This may take as long as three weeks.

If I was vaccinated as a child, am I at any risk?

Routine vaccination against smallpox ended in 1972. Level of immunity, if any, among persons who were vaccinated is uncertain.

What are the symptoms of smallpox?

Smallpox starts like the flu with fever, chills, headache and body aches. After a couple of days a rash starts, usually on the face, arms and legs. The rash differs from chickenpox in that all lesions are in the same stage of development at the same time.

What is the treatment for smallpox?

If you are exposed to smallpox, a vaccine can prevent the rash if administered within three days. Once the rash starts, the treatment is supportive care such as Tylenol and good hydration.

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. You should wash your hands any time you have contact with a person with smallpox or items used on a person infected with the disease.
- Caregivers should wear gloves until the patient is no longer infectious.
- 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 limited to what is medically necessary until the patient is no longer contagious. If travel is necessary before this point, the patient's nose and mouth should be covered with a mask.
- Patients with smallpox should not be housed with others who are immunocompromised, including infants, the elderly, those with a debilitating illness such as cancer or HIV, and those with chronic illness treated with steroids.
- Trash should be placed in a receptacle as soon as possible. Use gloves to handle patient items. Your local trash service will direct the ultimate disposal of trash.
- Linens should be washed separately with bleach and hot water. Use gloves.
- Dishes and silverware should be washed in a bleach and hot water solution.
- Personal items such as toothbrushes, razors or drinking cups should never be shared.

TULAREMIA—FACT SHEET

What is tularemia?

Tularemia is an illness that is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. It can infect the skin, mucous membranes, gastrointestinal tract or lungs.

How do I contract tularemia?

You can become infected through contact with an infected animal, through insect bites or via the ingestion of contaminated water. Inhaling infected particles will also result in illness. There is no person-to-person spread of the disease.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

Symptoms could include fever, shortness of breath, vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, weakness, skin ulceration, swollen lymph glands and sore mouth. The symptoms depend on how the disease was contracted and what form it takes.

What is the treatment?

The treatment of tularemia involves antibiotic therapy and supportive care in a hospital setting.

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.