

WEIL'S DISEASE AND LYME'S DISEASE

WEIL'S DISEASE

Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is a bacterial infection carried in the urine of mammals. It contaminates water and banks of canals, ponds, rivers and ditches. The risk of infection is especially high in slow moving rivers or stagnant water.

The disease is spread to humans when broken skin or mucous membranes come into contact with water or mud contaminated by rat urine.

People at risk

The people most at risk are those exposed to contaminated water or river banks due to occupation or leisure interests. These include practical conservation projects on slow moving water and habitat surveys on river banks as well as canoeing, sailing, water skiing and other water sports.

How serious is it?

The disease is serious and needs hospital treatment. The illness can quickly lead to kidney or liver failure which could be fatal. Recent statistics show that although Weil's disease is very rare, one infected person in nineteen is likely to die as a result of infection.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms start 3 to 19 days after exposure to the contaminated water. The early symptoms are similar to flu, with aching joints, raised temperature and muscle pains, especially in the calf muscles. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor immediately, advising him or her of your possible exposure to the Weil's disease bacteria. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential for recovery from the illness.

How to Avoid Infection

DO	DON'T
Cover with waterproof plasters or gloves, all scratches, cuts, sores and skin affected by eczema etc	Put wet fishing line, ropes or other objects in your mouth
Wash your hands before you eat. Always wash or shower after any water sports or conservation work.	Go in or near water without wearing footwear.
Avoid capsizing in canoes etc. But if necessary use a mask or nose clip. Always wash or shower afterwards	Pick up or touch dead animals especially rats without wearing gloves
See you doctor if you feel unwell following involvement in water sports or conservation work	Leave food bait or ground bait on river banks. Please take your rubbish home

For further information, see [here](#)

LYME'S DISEASE

Lyme's Disease is caused by infection from a sheep tick. It carries the bacillus *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Only a small proportion of ticks actually carry the disease.

People at risk

The people most at risk are those who spend time in the vicinity of sheep and deer. These include hillwalkers, farm and forestry workers.

How serious is it?

It is a serious illness and left untreated, people with the infection are at risk of late complications.

What are the symptoms?

The disease progresses through three stages. The first stage - usually within a month of infection - produces a bulls-eye shaped rash often accompanied by joint pains and flu-like symptoms. The second and third stages can produce a wide range of symptoms including arthritis, serious neurological disorders, loss of memory, heart problems, meningitis and ultimately serious psychiatric disorders.

Lyme's disease can be difficult to detect both because it imitates other illnesses and because the course it takes may involve any or none of the three stages which may also overlap.

How to avoid infection

Conduct a daily body examination if operating in areas where there is a possibility that ticks exist.

For further information, see:

<http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/lyme.htm>