

# PLAGUE

## What is plague?

- Plague is a disease caused by *Yersinia pestis* (*Y. pestis*), a bacterium found in rodents and their fleas in many areas around the world.

## Is pneumonic plague different from bubonic plague?

Yes. Both are caused by *Yersinia pestis*, but they are transmitted differently and their symptoms differ.

**Pneumonic plague** can be transmitted from person to person. Pneumonic plague

affects the lungs and is transmitted when a person breathes in *Y. pestis* particles in the air.

**Bubonic plague** cannot be transmitted from person to person. It is transmitted through the bite of an infected flea or exposure to infected material through a break in the skin. Symptoms include swollen, tender lymph glands called buboes.

If bubonic plague is not treated, however, the bacteria can spread through the

bloodstream and infect the lungs, causing a secondary case of pneumonic plague.

## What are the signs and symptoms of pneumonic plague?

- Fever, weakness, and rapidly developing pneumonia with shortness of breath, chest pain, cough, and sometimes bloody or watery sputum. Nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain may also occur.

## Can pneumonic plague be treated?

- Yes. To prevent a high risk of death, antibiotics should be given within 24 hours.

## **How do people become infected with pneumonic plague?**

- Pneumonic plague occurs when *Yersinia pestis* infects the lungs. Transmission can take place if someone breathes in *Y. pestis* particles
- This can be transmitted from a person (or animal) with pneumonic plague.

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