



Sedgwick County...
working for you

Health Department

July 2009

fastFACTS

about Sedgwick County Government

Anthrax

What is Sedgwick County doing to protect the community from Anthrax?

Citizens look to local government for answers on how to be safe and respond to incidents in the community. Sedgwick County is leading a coordinated effort through the Health Department to assure the health and safety of their citizens in the event of a terrorist incident. Visit www.sedgwickcounty.org to learn more.

What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. There are three types of anthrax:

- Cutaneous (skin) anthrax occurs when a spore enters the skin through a cut or an abrasion. This form of anthrax is the most common.
- Gastrointestinal (digestive) anthrax is contracted when contaminated food is eaten; primarily meat from an animal that died of the disease.
- Inhalation (lungs) anthrax is contracted by breathing in airborne anthrax spores.

How do you get anthrax?

A person can become infected with anthrax by handling products from infected animals or inhaling anthrax spores from contaminated animal products. Anthrax can also be spread by eating undercooked meat from infected animals. It is rare to find infected animals in the United States. Anthrax is not known to spread from one person to another person.

Anthrax can be used as a bioterrorist weapon. This happened in the United States in 2001 when letters with powder containing anthrax were intentionally spread through the postal system.

What are the symptoms of anthrax?

The symptoms of anthrax are different depending on the type of the disease.

- Cutaneous (skin) anthrax: The first symptom is a small sore that develops into a blister. The blister then develops into a skin ulcer with a black area in the center.
- Gastrointestinal (digestive) anthrax: The first

symptoms are nausea, loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea, and fever, followed by stomach pain.

- Inhalation (lungs) anthrax: The first symptoms of inhalation anthrax are cold or flu-like symptoms and can include a sore throat, mild fever and muscle aches. Later symptoms include cough, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, and tiredness. Do not assume that just because a person has cold or flu symptoms that they have inhalation anthrax.

How quickly do symptoms of anthrax develop?

For all three types of anthrax, symptoms can appear within seven days of coming in contact with the bacterium. For inhalation anthrax, symptoms can appear within one week or can take up to 42 days to appear.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to anthrax?

Contact local law enforcement immediately if you think that you may have been exposed to anthrax. If you are showing symptoms of anthrax infection, call your health care provider right away.

How is Anthrax treated?

If a person has been exposed to anthrax but is not yet sick, antibiotics combined with the anthrax vaccine will be used to prevent anthrax infection. If a person has become sick since contact with anthrax, a 60-day supply of antibiotics is usually given. Success depends on the type of anthrax and how quickly treatment begins.

Additional Information:

Sedgwick County Health Department Public Health
Emergency Management (PHEM) Team On-Call Number:
(316) 660-5551

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:
www.cdc.gov
(888) 246-2675
(888) 246-2857 (Español)
(866) 874-2646 (TTY)