

Flea-borne Typhus

1. What is flea-borne typhus (typhus)?

Flea-borne typhus is a disease that fleas can spread to humans. Bacteria (germs) found in infected fleas cause typhus. People get sick with flea-borne typhus when infected flea feces (poop) are rubbed into cuts or scrapes in the skin or rubbed into the eyes.

2. How does this disease spread?

In LA County, typhus infects the fleas of rats, stray cats, opossums, or other small animals. Typhus spreads when animals and the fleas they carry come into close contact with people, especially if they find a source of food. Typhus can spread to other areas when these animals move from place to place. That's why you should not move these animals to another area.

3. What are the symptoms of this disease?

Signs of typhus can start within 2 weeks after contact with the infected flea. Many people have high fever, headache, chills, body aches and pains. A rash can appear on the chest, back, arms, or legs. In rare cases, there may be swelling at the lining of the brain (meningitis) and heart valves (endocarditis). Death may occur in rare cases.

4. How is this disease diagnosed and treated?

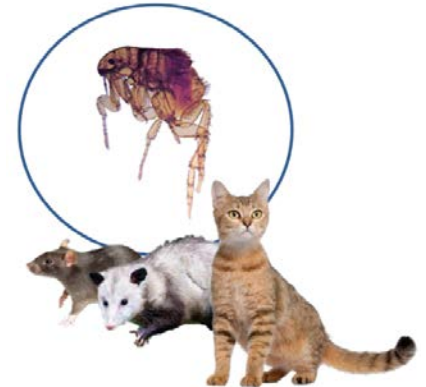
Typhus is diagnosed with a specific blood test. Call your doctor if you think you've been infected. This disease is treated only with certain antibiotics (medicine that kills bacteria).

5. Are my pets safe?

Infected fleas can also spread to pet cats and dogs. But infected animals do not usually get sick. They can carry infected fleas and bring them closer to people.

6. How can you prevent getting this disease?

- **Practice safe flea control**
 - Use flea control products on your pets.
 - Keep cats indoors.
 - Use EPA-registered insect repellent labeled for use against fleas.
- **Avoid being near wild or stray animals**
 - Never feed or touch wild animals, especially opossums and stray cats.
 - Store your trash in cans with secure lids to avoid attracting animals.
 - Close up places where rats and stray animals can sleep, hide, or find food, like crawl spaces, attics, or under decks.
 - Protect yourself by wearing gloves and a mask when cleaning these areas. Wash your hands when you're finished.



Key Points

- Flea-borne typhus is a disease that fleas can spread to humans. Infected fleas carry bacteria (germs) that cause the disease.
- Practice safe flea control, avoid fleas and use flea control products on your pets.
- Never feed or touch wild animals, especially opossums, rats, and stray cats.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public
Health

<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorTyphus.htm>

California Department of
Public Health

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Typhus.a>

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