



## 1. What is smallpox?

Smallpox is a contagious and sometimes fatal disease caused by a virus. It causes a rash and can be confused with chickenpox.

## 2. Who can get smallpox?

The virus (germ) is carried by humans only and is passed from person-to-person.

## 3. How is smallpox spread?

Smallpox is spread by direct and prolonged face-to-face contact with an infected person. Direct contact occurs by breathing in droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person. Smallpox also can be spread through direct contact with infected bodily fluids or contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing.

Rarely, smallpox has been spread by virus carried in the air in enclosed settings such as buildings, buses, and trains.

## 4. How do you know if you have smallpox?

The symptoms of smallpox begin with high fever, headache, body aches and sometimes vomiting. A rash will appear 2 to 3 days later. It can start on the mouth, face, hands, or forearms, and then spread to the legs and body. The rash leads to pus-filled sores on the face, arms and legs. Lesions may also be found on the hands and feet.

## 5. How is smallpox treated?

Currently, there are no treatments for smallpox. Patients may be given fluids and medicine to control fever or pain. They can also be given antibiotics to treat other infections that might occur. Death usually occurs in 1 out of 10 infected people.

## 6. Is there a vaccine against smallpox?

The smallpox vaccine is not available to the public. The U.S. government has plans to protect Americans from smallpox if it were to be used in a bioterrorist attack. As part of this plan, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has been working with state and local governments to develop a national stockpile of smallpox vaccine.

## 7. What other information do I need to know about smallpox?

The Public Health Department is prepared to respond to public health emergencies. If there is a real threat, the Public Health Department will contact the news to give you information on how to protect yourself and your family.

More information about smallpox and other bioterrorism agents is available on LA County's Emergency Preparedness and Response website at [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp) as well as the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

### Sources

1. *Smallpox*. L.A. Department of Public Health. <http://lapublichealth.org/acd/Diseases/Smallpox.htm>
2. *Smallpox*. California Department of Public Health (CDPH). <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/>
3. *Smallpox*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/>
4. *What You Should Know About a Smallpox Outbreak*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/basics/outbreak.asp>

For additional resources, please dial 2-1-1 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.