

What Is Plague?

Plague is a disease caused by microorganisms (germs) called bacteria. It is usually passed between rabbits and rodents, such as rats, mice, prairie dogs, and squirrels, by the bite of an infected flea. The disease can be passed to people and cats by flea bites. People and cats can also get plague by coming in contact with animals that have plague or have died from the disease.

Plague occurs in three forms:

Bubonic plague is the most common form. People usually get it from a flea bite. It can cause swelling in the neck, under the arm, or in the groin area. The swellings are called “buboes” and are sore when touched.

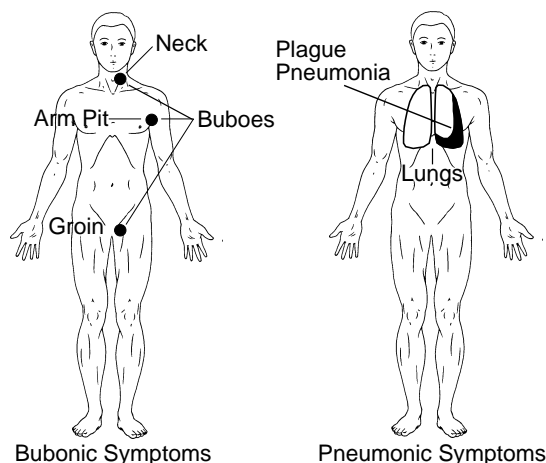
Septicemic plague occurs when the plague bacteria get into the blood. This could happen through an open cut on the skin. People get very ill with this form of plague.

Pneumonic plague is the least common, but most dangerous, form of plague. In this form, the bacteria get into the lungs and can be easily passed from one person to another through coughing and sneezing. Cats can also get this form and pass it to people.

Symptoms

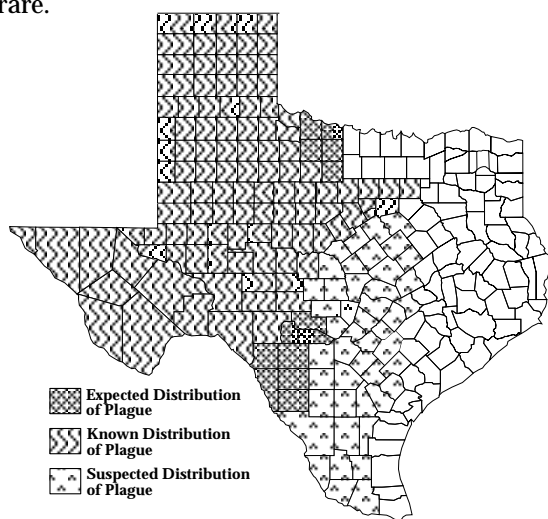
About 2 to 6 days after being bitten by an infected flea, a person with plague will have fever, restlessness, confusion, extreme tiredness, and other flu-like symptoms. A few days later, one or more buboes may develop. If the person is not treated by a doctor, he or she may become very ill and even die.

Forms of Plague and Symptoms



Is Plague In Texas?

Yes. Plague has been found in the western two-thirds of Texas where there are squirrels, prairie dogs, rabbits, rats, and mice. If a large number of these animals are found dead or dying, plague could be the cause. Plague in people is rare.



How Can I Tell If An Animal Has Plague?

You cannot. Do not handle sick or dead wild animals. If you have a sick cat, take it to a veterinarian right away. If you see large numbers of dead or dying animals in your area, call your local health department or regional Texas Department of State Health Services office. The animals can be tested for plague.

What Can I Do To Protect Myself From Plague?

1. Prevent fleas in and around your house and on your pets. Call a veterinarian to learn about flea control products you can use.
2. Remove places around your house where rabbits, rats, and mice could live, such as piles of trash and high weeds. Patch any holes in your house where rats, mice, or squirrels could enter. Do **not** leave dishes of pet food where they could attract wild animals. Store pet food in containers with a tight lid; remove pet dishes after your pet has eaten.
3. Use flea control before killing any rodents. If you kill the rodents first, their fleas could get on you or your pets.



What Can I Do If I Travel Into A Plague Area?

If you hunt, fish, camp, or otherwise visit an area where there is plague:

1. Use insect repellent. Follow the directions on the container carefully.
2. Protect your pets with a safe flea control product, or leave your pets at home.
3. Remember, people can get plague from direct contact with an animal that has the disease. If your cat has swollen lymph nodes, an abscess-like wound, coughing, or sneezing, do not place the animal's face close to yours. Contact a veterinarian for advice.
4. Avoid all contact with rabbits, prairie dogs, squirrels, mice, rats, or other wild animals. **Do not feed them!**
5. Avoid contact with fleas. Do not camp, rest, or sleep near animal burrows.
6. Wear gloves if you are hunting and must handle wildlife.
7. Do **not** touch sick or dead animals.
8. If you see a large number of dead or dying animals, call your local health department or regional Texas Department of State Health Services office.
9. Call a doctor if you get sick within a week of visiting an area with plague. If you have plague, a doctor can treat you for the disease.

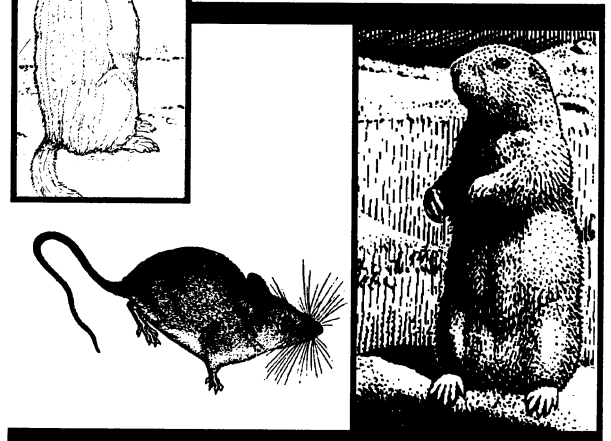
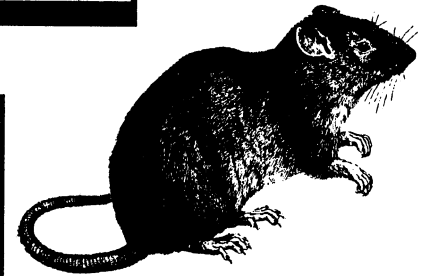
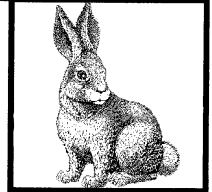
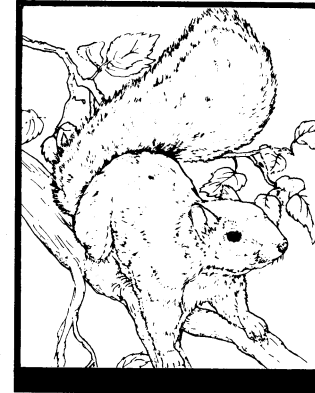


Texas Department of State Health Services
Zoonosis Control

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FACTS ABOUT PLAGUE



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF
STATE HEALTH SERVICES