

# Anthrax



## What is anthrax?

Anthrax has been used in terrorist attacks. It is a very serious disease. It is not contagious; you **cannot** get sick from someone who has anthrax.

## How do you get anthrax?

There are 3 ways you can get anthrax:

- Through a cut or scratch on your skin.
- From breathing anthrax that is in the air.
- By eating food infected with anthrax.

## How dangerous is anthrax?

Most people (99%) who get treated early for skin anthrax survive. Without treatment, 20% will die.



Breathing anthrax is more dangerous. Up to half of the people who breathe anthrax will die.

In rare cases, anthrax is found in meat naturally. There is a 25% - 50% chance of dying from eating this infected meat. Someone could add anthrax to food to infect the people who eat it.

## What are the symptoms?

**Skin anthrax** produces a small, itchy bump (usually on the face, hands or arms) that turns



into a blister. The blister becomes an open sore that is black in the middle.

If you **breathe anthrax**, at first you could feel like you have a cold or flu, but with no runny nose. You may have a sore throat, mild fever and muscle aches, followed by a cough, shortness of breath, chest discomfort, and tiredness.

**Anthrax from infected meat** causes nausea, loss of hunger, bloody diarrhea, fever, and bad stomach pain.

## When do the symptoms start?

For all 3 kinds of anthrax, symptoms can start within 7 days of contact.

If you breathe anthrax, symptoms may begin within a week, or may not start for over a month.

## What would an anthrax attack look like?

In most cases in the past, anthrax has been found in the form of a white powder. If you find an unknown white powder in your mail or other place, follow these steps:

- Do not touch or sniff the powder.
- Tell others not to go near the powder.
- Wash your hands.
- Call your local fire or police department.

## What if I think I was exposed to anthrax?

Call your doctor or hospital **right away**.



## Is there a vaccine?

Yes, however there is only enough vaccine for people who are exposed to anthrax and people who have high-risk jobs, such as military personnel and health workers.

## For more information...

Call CDC for help in English or Spanish:  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: [www.cdc.gov/anthrax](http://www.cdc.gov/anthrax)  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/epo](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epo)