

# ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The RSA Tower, 201 Monroe Street, P.O. Box 303017, Montgomery, AL 36130-3017  
(334) 206-5300 • FAX (334) 206-5534 Web Site: <http://www.adph.org>

## NEWS RELEASE

Residents should take protective actions because of plague outbreak

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Contact Person  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx  
e-mail address

The Alabama Department of Public Health has been advised that an outbreak of plague has occurred in \_\_\_\_\_ (list affected areas). Residents of these areas are encouraged to take protective action to prevent exposure, seek medical attention to prevent exposure, and seek medical attention if they have been exposed.

Plague is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* that affects humans and animals. This bacterium is found in rodents and their fleas and occurs in many areas of the world, including the United States.

Exposure varies depending on the form of plague.

- Bubonic – occurs when an infected flea bites a person or when materials contaminated with *Y. pestis* enter a person through a break in the skin. This form of plague is not contagious.
- Pneumonic – occurs when *Y. pestis* infects the lungs. It is caused by breathing in aerosolized plague. This form of plague is also spread by breathing in *Y. pestis* suspended in respiratory droplets from a person or animal with pneumonic plague. This usually occurs because of direct close contact with the ill person or animal.

Pneumonic plague can also occur if a person with bubonic or septicemic plague is untreated and the bacteria spread to the lungs.

- Septicemic – occurs when bacteria multiply in the blood. It can either occur by itself or as a secondary illness caused by complications from bubonic or pneumonic plague. When it occurs alone it is caused in the same ways as bubonic.

This form of plague is not contagious.

“We want people who are in the affected areas to take this threat seriously and take precautions to limit exposure to themselves and others,” said \_\_\_\_\_ (Public Health spokesperson). “We also want those who have been exposed to take measures to prevent serious harm and to seek medical attention immediately if they have symptoms.”

Symptoms vary according to the form of plague.

- Bubonic – The first symptoms appear 2 to 6 days after infection and include fever, headache, chills and weakness. Persons with bubonic plague also develop swollen, tender lymph glands called buboes.
- Pneumonic – Symptoms usually appear 2 to 4 days after exposure. Initial symptoms appear flu-like, such as high fever, cough and chills. Later symptoms include pneumonia and watery or bloody sputum (coughing up blood).
- Septicemic – Symptoms usually occur 2 to 6 days after infection. Initial symptoms include nausea, vomiting, fever and chills. Later symptoms include blood pressure, abdominal pain, shock and internal bleeding.

Treatment of plague with antibiotics must begin immediately to be effective. Early treatment of pneumonic plague is essential. To reduce the chance of death, antibiotics must be given within 24 hours of first symptoms. Streptomycin, gentamicin, the tetracyclines and chloramphenicol are all effective against plague.

The department has scheduled a point of dispensing site at \_\_\_\_\_ (location – city) from \_\_\_\_\_ (time) to dispense \_\_\_\_\_ (medication). The \_\_\_\_\_ (medication) will be designated for the following priority groups:

- Priority group
- Priority group
- Priority group

Stay tuned to your local radio or television stations for more information, developments or changes in the situation. For more information on biological agents, please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).