

## Frequently Asked Questions for Dog Owners

### What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects people and some animals, like dogs. It rarely affects cats.

### Is leptospirosis in New York City (NYC)?

Yes. Leptospirosis has been found in people and dogs in all five boroughs. Many different animals can carry the bacteria that cause leptospirosis. In NYC, rats are the most common source.



### How is leptospirosis spread?

The bacteria that cause leptospirosis are spread through the urine of infected animals and can live in water or soil for weeks to months. People and animals can get infected if the bacteria enter their eyes, nose or mouth, or a cut or scratch on their skin. Dogs usually get infected by licking or drinking water or soil contaminated with rat urine.

### Can I get leptospirosis from my dog?

Yes, but leptospirosis spreading from dogs to people is extremely rare in the U.S. and has not been reported in NYC.

### What are the signs and symptoms of leptospirosis, and how long do they last?

Dogs usually get sick one to two weeks after exposure. Signs, which can last for weeks, include fever, chills, loss of appetite, vomiting, muscle aches and diarrhea. Some dogs may develop more severe illness, such as kidney or liver failure, even after their initial symptoms seem to improve.

### How can I protect my dog from leptospirosis?

Keep your home free of rodents and your dog away from rodents and other small wild mammals. Do not let your dog drink from puddles or other water sources that may contain animal urine. Speak with your veterinarian about vaccination to help prevent leptospirosis.



## How is leptospirosis diagnosed?

Your veterinarian can diagnose your dog for leptospirosis based on its history of exposure (such as to rats or puddles of water), symptoms, and blood or urine test results.

## How is leptospirosis treated?

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics. Treating it early can help prevent severe disease. Hospitalization may be necessary for dogs with severe illness.

## What should I do if my dog is diagnosed with leptospirosis?

Your veterinarian will begin treating your dog with antibiotics, which will lower the amount of bacteria it sheds when urinating. To protect yourself and others while your dog is being treated:

- Wash your hands carefully after handling your dog or its urine.
- Have your dog urinate in an area where the urine will dry up quickly and contact with people and other dogs is less likely. Sunlight and drying up the urine will kill the bacteria.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning your dog's bedding or any areas with urine.

- Clean areas that may have been contaminated by urine, feces or vomit with an iodine- or bleach-based disinfectant.
- Contact your health care provider if you feel sick.

## If my dog already had leptospirosis, can it get infected again?

Yes. There are many different strains of the bacteria that cause leptospirosis. After recovering from leptospirosis, an animal can get sick again from another strain of the bacteria.

## Where can I get more information?

- For questions, speak with your veterinarian.
- For more information and resources on leptospirosis, visit [nyc.gov/health](https://www.nyc.gov/health) and search for **leptospirosis**.
- For NYC rat inspection maps and information about rat prevention and management, visit [nyc.gov/rats](https://www.nyc.gov/rats).

