



# Aston-on-Trent Primary School

Long Croft, Aston-on-Trent, Derby DE72 2UH

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Headteacher: Mr Sam Moore



## **Weil's Disease – Information for Parents & Carers**

We have been instructed by the local authority that parents & carers should be given Information about the potential hazards around stagnant water and the risk of Weil's Disease.

Children may take part in pond dipping on certain schools trips. It is highly unlikely that any child will catch the disease- but please read the following information.

All risk assessments will be made and adhered to, and staff are aware of the risks and will be supervising children. Children are also directed to wash their hands regular and after the activity.

In addition, please ensure all cuts and scratches are covered up for the activity and that you keep a copy of this information- please seek medical advice should you be at all concerned about any of the symptoms of Weil's Disease.

### **What is it?**

Weil's disease is a form of a bacterial infection also known as Leptospirosis that is carried by animals, most commonly in rats and cattle. It can be caught by humans through contact with rat or cattle urine, most commonly occurring through contaminated fresh water. Although human infection in the UK is minimal it is still worth taking some preventative measures to decrease the possibility of contracting it.

### **Causes of infection**

Infection of humans usually occurs where open wounds are immersed in relatively stagnant water contaminated with rat or cattle urine. It can be contracted from contact with any fresh or untreated water including ponds, canals, lakes and rivers, as well as flood waters that are contaminated.

Those most at risk of infection are open water swimmers who expose their whole body to possible infection. Activities that occur in or near fresh water such as fishing, water skiing, sailing and kayaking also present a risk. Activities that can cause open wounds or that take place near the water's edge where rat urine is more likely to be found increase the risk of contracting the disease.

People who have previously had leptospirosis develop immunity to the particular strain that they were infected with and others closely related for up to ten years. They are not immune to other strains and may become infected again if continuing in activities where it is a risk. It does not usually result from swallowing water or rat bites.





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The risk of contracting the disease varies according to the size of the local rat population, which unfortunately is very hard to assess. Landowners, local authority environmental health departments, and in agricultural areas, DEFRA, may be able to provide assistance for operators who may need to assess the risk.

## **Symptoms**

Symptoms can occur between 3 and 21 days from the time of infection. There can be two distinct phases of leptospirosis.

The first phase - Symptoms are similar to those of the flu, including high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, and vomiting, and may also include a rash.

May last between 3 to 5 days before recovery.

In mild cases the patient will recover after just the first phase but they can suffer fatigue and depression for some time afterwards.

The second phase - initial symptoms will reoccur. Further symptoms can vary according to severity and may include jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), red eyes, abdominal pain, and diarrhoea.

Symptoms can be similar to those of meningitis.

Severe cases can also cause the failure of kidneys or liver. Death can occur due to heart, liver, or respiratory failure.

## **Preventative Measures**

The best prevention is to understand where and how Weil's disease can be caught and taking precautions based on this knowledge. If you know you may come into contact with untreated water such as flood waters, canals, ponds and rivers you can reduce the risk of infection by taking the following precautions:

- Cover any open wounds such as cuts and scratches with waterproof plasters.
- Wear protective clothing such as gloves.
- Wash thoroughly and as soon as possible if you have entered the water.
- Assess the risk of the likelihood of contamination if contemplating entering fresh water, particularly be aware of stagnant water.
- Carefully clean any open wounds obtained during time at fresh water.

This information will also be on the website for your convenience.

**Mr Sam Moore- Headteacher**

(Source – ROSPA Website [Weil's Disease](#))

