

Brucella canis:

A Guide for Pet Owners After a Positive Diagnosis

Receiving a positive diagnosis for *Brucella canis* (*B. canis*) can feel overwhelming. The goal of this guide is to provide clear and practical information to help keep you and your household safe.

What is canine brucellosis?

Canine brucellosis is a **bacterial infection dogs carry for life**. Infected dogs shed bacteria in **urine, saliva** and **reproductive fluids**. Contact with these infected fluids puts both people and other pets at risk for infection.

Can I become ill from canine brucellosis?

Canine brucellosis infection in people is uncommon. Exposure occurs when infected fluids contact **broken skin, mucous membranes** or are **inhaled**. Your mucous membranes include eyes, mouth and nose.

Symptoms usually appear 2–4 weeks after exposure to infected fluids and mimic the flu:

- Repeated fevers, chills and night sweats
- Headache, profound fatigue and muscle aches
- Joint pain (especially back, hips and knees)
- Unintended weight loss

In pregnant women, infection increases the risk of miscarriage, early delivery or stillbirth. In men, untreated infection can lead to long-term sterility. Immune-compromised individuals should seek immediate medical evaluation after any exposure to infected fluids or dogs that may be infected with canine brucellosis.

How can I reduce the risk of becoming ill from canine brucellosis?

The key is preventing contact with your dog's bodily fluids.

- Wear gloves, eye protection and a mask when handling your dog's fluids or assisting with breeding or births.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas.
 - First, clean by scrubbing contaminated areas with soap and water.
 - Then, disinfect contaminated areas by spraying a solution of 1 cup bleach per gallon of water. Keep surfaces wet for at least 10 minutes.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after any contact with bodily fluids or contaminated areas.

What should I do if I am exposed to canine brucellosis or become ill?

If you suspect an exposure, call your doctor right away. Preventive antibiotics may be prescribed.

A long course of antibiotics is required for full recovery if you are diagnosed with brucellosis.

What should I do if my dog is positive for canine brucellosis?

Infected dogs remain lifelong carriers and shed the bacteria for life. Antibiotic treatment rarely clears the infection from dogs.

Discuss management options with your veterinarian. Your veterinarian may recommend humane euthanasia to protect you, your family and other pets. This decision is deeply personal, and your veterinarian will help guide you through this difficult decision.

Additional resources

For more detailed *B. canis* guidance and to support discussions with your healthcare provider or veterinarian, visit: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/health-prevention/animal-safety-and-disease-prevention>

For pet loss and grief support resources, visit the Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center website: <https://vetmed.iastate.edu/vmc/clients/pet-loss-grief-resources/>