

# Erie County Medical Center

## Specialized Medical Assistance Response Team

---

### ANTHRAX INFORMATION SHEET

Based on local and national experience with anthrax scares and after consultation with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other federal, state and local officials, this threat has been deemed to be extremely minimal. Based on this threat analysis and consultation with world anthrax experts, we recommend that everyone involved take the following precautions:

1. Thoroughly shower with ordinary soap and shampoo.
2. Wash all clothing with ordinary laundry detergent.
3. If you develop fever, chills, respiratory distress, shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, chest soreness, noisy breathing or a new sore on your skin within the next 5 days, we strongly recommend that you begin taking antibiotics as soon as possible. Therefore, you should contact your doctor or go to the Erie County Medical Center or other local emergency department immediately.
4. Please share these instructions with your physician and ask him/her to notify Jack Schwartz, Erie County Health Department at 858-7698 during normal business hours for public health record keeping purposes. The physician may contact the Erie County Medical Emergency Radio System at 898-3696 for additional information about Anthrax (medical providers only please).
5. A public announcement will be made if further treatment is indicated based on environmental testing and other cultures that may be conducted.

#### What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a disease normally associated with plant-eating animals (sheep, goats, cattle, pigs) and is caused by the bacteria *Bacillus Anthracis*. The bacteria may become dormant for many years by forming spores, which are similar to the seeds of a plant.

#### How can I get infected with anthrax?

Fortunately, anthrax can only enter the body under *ideal* conditions. Anthrax may be swallowed, inhaled or enter through a wound or other break in the skin.

#### Can anthrax be transmitted from person to person?

There has **never** been a report of anthrax being transmitted from person to person.

#### Can I get anthrax from washing contaminated clothing?

There has **never** been a report of individuals developing anthrax from handling clothing soiled with culture-proven anthrax.

#### Is Anthrax treatable?

Anthrax is very treatable with common antibiotics. However, it is important that treatment begin very soon after the onset of those symptoms described above.

#### I have flu-like symptoms, should I ignore them?

No. Your flu-like symptoms are most likely from the flu. However, you should begin taking antibiotics since a threat of anthrax was made. Your doctor may elect to stop the antibiotics after any ongoing environmental testing and other cultures have conclusively ruled-out anthrax.

#### Is the building safe to enter?

The building has been thoroughly searched and no significant evidence of anthrax contamination has been found. Further, any anthrax that could have been in the air will quickly fall to the ground and become harmless.