

## **ANTHRAX INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

Based on local and national experience with anthrax scares and after consultation with the Centers for Disease Control, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other federal, state and local officials, recent threats of anthrax have been deemed to be extremely minimal. Based on this threat analysis and consultation with world anthrax experts, we recommended the following precautions for all involved:

- (1) Thoroughly shower with ordinary soap and shampoo.
- (2) Wash all clothing in ordinary laundry detergent.
- (3) Antibiotic prophylaxis was **NOT** recommended by the CDC. This was based upon the extremely low likelihood of anthrax and the high efficacy of treatment begun soon after onset of actual anthrax symptoms. Therefore, potentially exposed individuals were instructed to contact a physician or go to an emergency department immediately if within the next 5 days they developed fever, chills, respiratory distress, cough, chest pain, chest soreness, noisy breathing, or a new sore (possibly cutaneous anthrax).
- (4) For individuals with any of the above symptoms it is strongly recommended that the treating clinician initiate antibiotics until the threat of anthrax has been completely ruled-out (see below). Antibiotics currently recommended by the CDC include one of the following:
  - Cipro 500 mg PO bid (primary choice for individuals 18 years of age and older)
  - Doxycycline 100 mg PO bid (probably safe for individuals 8 years of age and older)
  - Penicillin 500 mg PO qid
- (5) Patient cultures and infectious disease consultation may be considered. Also, results from environmental samples and other cultures taken during the incident (e.g., random nasal swabs) should be available within 5 days. Current recommendations for DOCUMENTED anthrax include continuing antibiotics for 4 weeks and vaccinating for anthrax.
- (6) Obviously, some of the individuals involved will develop common respiratory ailments that may mimic symptoms of anthrax. For epidemiological/public health tracking purposes we ask that you notify Mr. Jack Schwartz, Erie County Health Department at 858-7698 whenever you begin treatment/prophylaxis for any of these individuals.
- (7) You may also obtain additional information by contacting Mr. Schwartz during normal business hours or the Erie County Medical Emergency Radio System (MERS Control) at 898-3696 after hours.

### **ANTHRAX FACTS (related to individuals involved)**

#### **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. You 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.