

Cat Scratch Disease **FACTSHEET**

CSD

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What is Cat Scratch Disease?

Cat Scratch Disease is a bacterial disease. Most people with cat scratch disease have been bitten or scratched by a cat and developed a mild infection at the point of injury.

Who gets Cat Scratch Disease?

Anyone who has contact with a cat or kitten can be exposed to cat scratch disease. However, the disease is more common in children and young adults. The majority of cases are seen in late summer, fall, and winter months.

What are the symptoms of Cat Scratch Disease?

A. The symptoms of cat scratch disease are usually preceded by a cat scratch, lick or bite that produces a red skin lesion. Lymph nodes, especially those around the head, neck, and upper limbs become swollen. A person may also experience fever, headache, tiredness, and poor appetite. Symptoms may be more severe if you are immunosuppressed.

How is Cat Scratch Disease spread?

Cat scratch disease is spread through a scratch, lick, bite or other exposure to a healthy, usually young cat (often a kitten).

How soon do symptoms appear?

The red skin lesion usually occurs three to fourteen days after the injury. Lymph node involvement usually occurs from five to fifty days from the injury.

Is a person with Cat Scratch Disease contagious?

No, the disease is not spread from person-to-person.

How is Cat Scratch Disease treated?

Treatment is usually not necessary for cat scratch disease. However, there are several antibiotics that can be used to treat cat scratch disease when it is indicated. Individuals who are immunocompromised should consult their physician for treatment with antibiotics.

Should a person with Cat Scratch Disease be excluded from work or school?

It is not necessary to exclude a person with cat scratch disease from work or school.

How can Cat Scratch Disease be prevented?

Cat scratch disease can be prevented by:

- Avoiding “rough play” with cats, especially kittens. This includes any activity that may lead to cat scratches and bites
- Wash cat scratches and bites immediately and thoroughly with running water and soap
- Do not allow cats to lick open wounds that you may have
- Control fleas.

Want more information?

Additional information about Cat Scratch Disease and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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