



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A rare, bacterial infection transmitted to humans from infected cows, pigs, sheep or goats. It is not contagious from person to person. It affects the blood-producing organs, including bone marrow, lymph glands, liver and spleen. It is more common in men between ages 20 and 60. The incubation period can be from 5 to 60 days and may be several months. The disease has an acute form and a chronic form.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

In the acute form, the following symptoms appear suddenly:

- Chills, intermittent fever, sweating.
- Marked fatigue.
- Tenderness along the spine.
- Headache.
- Enlarged lymph glands.

In the chronic form, the following symptoms appear gradually:

- Fatigue.
- Muscle pain.
- Backache.
- Constipation.
- Weight loss.
- Depression.
- Sexual impotence.
- Abscesses in the ovaries, kidney and brain (rare).

### CAUSES

Infection from the bacteria, *Brucella*, which is transmitted to humans through unpasteurized milk or milk products (butter, cheese) or meat products.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Pernicious anemia or previous stomach surgery. These conditions result in reduced stomach acid; stomach acid decreases the chance of infection.
- Persons with occupations involving animals, such as farmers, butchers, veterinarians or ranchers.
- Travel to some foreign countries.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't drink unpasteurized milk from any source.
- Use gloves, goggles, aprons and other protective measures when working around animals.
- Immunization of livestock.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable in 3 to 4 weeks with treatment.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Heart, bone, brain or liver infection (rare).
- Chronic illness and disability from inadequate treatment and care.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- A definite diagnosis is made from blood tests.
- Treatment consists of a period of bed rest and antibiotic therapy.
- It usually is not necessary to isolate the ill person.
- All family members who may have been exposed to the same infected milk products should have medical checkups and diagnostic tests.
- Additional information available from the Food Safety and Inspection Service, Office of Public Awareness, Dept. of Agriculture, Room 1165-S, Washington, DC 20205, (800) 535-4555.

### MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics to fight infection, such as tetracycline, for a minimum of 3 weeks.
- Cortisone drugs to reduce the inflammatory response in severe cases.
- Pain relievers for muscle pain.

### ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until fever and other symptoms subside. Resume your normal activities gradually.

### DIET

No special diet. Increase calories if weight loss has been significant.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of brucellosis.
- Fever or other symptoms recur after treatment.