

Diseases Fact Sheet - Q Fever

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Q fever is an illness caused by *Coxiella burnetii*, which is found in farm animals such as goats, cows, sheep and more. Those infected experience flu-like symptoms.

How does Q fever spread?

According to the [CDC](#), Q fever can cause infection in people who experience one of the following:

- Breathing in contaminated dust particles that have been in contact with infected animal birth products, feces, milk or urine.
- Ingesting unpasteurized dairy products from an infected animal.
- Touching an infected animal, though it isn't required to catch the illness.

Various professions put people at increased risk for infection due to a higher likelihood of exposure to *C. burnetii*. Veterinarians, dairy farmers/workers, livestock farmers, meat or dairy processing plant workers.

What are the symptoms?

About half of those who become infected with *C. burnetii* will display symptoms of sickness 2-3 weeks following exposure. Symptoms may be mild or severe, and the illness can develop into chronic Q fever, which can be serious or even deadly. Symptoms of Q fever include:

- Chest pain
- Chills or sweats
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea



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- Stomach pain
- Unproductive Cough
- Weight loss
- Vomiting

Pregnant women who are infected could experience miscarriage, stillbirth or other birth defects.

Can it be prevented?

Though there is not currently a vaccine available for Q fever, there are [steps people can take to avoid infection](#). Reduce risk by:

- Limiting or avoiding any contact with animals, especially those giving birth
- Never consume raw milk products

Additional Information:

Please talk to your health care provider if you feel you may have Q fever, or visit the CDC website for more information on [Q Fever](#).