

CUTANEOUS ANTHRAX

Definition: Anthrax is a serious disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a bacterium that forms spores. There are three types of anthrax:

- **Skin (cutaneous)**
- **Lungs (inhalation)**
- **Digestive (gastrointestinal)**

Transmission: Anthrax is not known to spread from one person to another. Humans can become infected with anthrax by handling products from infected animals or by breathing in anthrax spores from infected animal products (like wool, for example). People also can become infected with gastrointestinal anthrax by eating undercooked meat from infected animals. Anthrax also can be used as a weapon.

Symptoms:

- **Cutaneous:** The first symptom is a small sore that develops into a blister. The blister then develops into a skin ulcer with a black area in the center. The sore, blister and ulcer do not hurt.
- **Gastrointestinal:** The first symptoms are nausea, loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea, and fever, followed by bad stomach pain.
- **Inhalation:** The first symptoms of inhalation anthrax are like cold or flu symptoms and can include a sore throat, mild fever and muscle aches. Later symptoms include cough, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, tiredness and muscle aches.

Exposure: **DO** will decide if there was an exposure and personnel will be sent to our infectious disease physician for treatment.

Precautions and PPE considerations: Respiratory precautions and Level A Hazmat suits if Anthrax is suspected or known. An SCBA for respiratory protection shall be used due to the fact that anthrax comes in a spore state. Equipment can be decontaminated using soap and water, and 0.5% hypochlorite solution

Treatments: In most cases, early treatment with antibiotics can cure cutaneous anthrax. Even if untreated, 80 percent of people who become infected with cutaneous anthrax do not die. Gastrointestinal anthrax is more serious because between one-fourth and more than half of cases lead to death. Inhalation anthrax is much more severe. In 2001, about half of the cases of inhalation anthrax ended in death

Work Guidelines: Exposure would be evaluated by our infection control physician if an exposure has been determined.