



LEPTOSPIROSIS / WEIL'S DISEASE FROM RATS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Weil's disease form of leptospirosis is contracted from the urine of infected rats. The bacteria get into your body through cuts and scratches or through the lining of the mouth, throat and eyes after contact with infected urine or contaminated water. It is a rare condition in the UK.

The disease starts with flu-like symptoms such as a headache or muscle pains. More severe cases can lead to meningitis, kidney failure and other serious conditions. In rare cases the disease can be fatal. Make sure you tell the Doctor that you might have been in contact with rat urine.

WHAT YOU MUST DO

Identify and assess: The risk of Weil's disease is linked to areas where rats are or have been present. Work is considered higher risk where there is evidence of rat infestation.

Control the risk

Where Weil's disease is known / assumed to be present, control this risk by:

- Pest control is a very important element to consider for keeping the rodent population to a minimum and for sites located next to a river or in an urban area are likely to pose more of a risk. **In addition to scheduled pest control service visits, if further rat activity is identified between visits then this should be reported to your pest control provider to carry out additional visit(s) in order to minimize risk and prevent growth of the population.**
- Wearing protective clothing like gloves and coveralls.
- Following good hygiene including regular hand-washing and avoiding hand to mouth/eye etc contact.
- Taking rest breaks, including meals and drinks, away from the work area.
- Washing cuts and grazes immediately with soap and running water Cover all cuts, abrasions and other breaks in the skin with waterproof dressings and/or gloves.
- Training and awareness of the presence and risk of vermin, including the above essential preventative measures including knowing the signs and symptoms of infection and to seek immediate medical advice.

Review

Check your pest control is effective, **including closure of identified recommended actions on service visit reports.**

Ensure workers are trained in the **hazards of rodent activity** and the necessary key controls including procedure for reporting rodent activity, PPE, Hygiene, and First Aid, as well as the symptoms of leptospirosis / Weil's disease.

Source: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/harmful-micro-organisms/leptospirosis-weils-disease.htm>

Guidance document – **INDG84**