**Leptospirosis**

**Definition:**

Leptospirosis is a disease in humans and animals caused by *Leptospira* bacteria. These bacteria are found in a wide range of wild and domestic animals worldwide.

**Signs and symptoms:**

Symptoms of leptospirosis may include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, and diarrhea. Yellowing of the skin and eyes, red eyes, belly pain, or a rash could be present. Some infected persons may have no symptoms at all. Symptoms usually begin 1-2 weeks after exposure to the bacteria.

**Transmission:**

Person to person transmission is rare. People get leptospirosis by:

* Drinking water that has been contaminated by the urine or body fluids of infected animals, or
* Direct non-intact skin contact with contaminated water, soil, or urine of infected animals.

**Diagnosis:**

Leptospirosis is diagnosed through lab tests on blood or urine.

**Role of the School Nurse:**

**Prevention**

* The key to preventing leptospirosis is avoiding contact with environments potentially contaminated with animal urine
* Outdoor sports participants should cover cuts or abrasions of the skin
* Protective clothing and footwear should be worn in swampy, flooded, and muddy areas
* Wear gloves for handling animal cages or urine
* Promote strict hand hygiene

**Treatment Recommendations**

* Leptospirosis requires antibiotic treatment, usually doxycycline or penicillin, prescribed by the primary care provider

**Exclusions**

* There is no need to exclude students from school for leptospirosis
* Education modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis

**Reporting Requirements**

* Leptospirosis is a reportable disease. Call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 or fax report to 1-800-293-7534

**Resources:**

* Maine CDC Leptospirosis website, including fact sheet (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/zoonotic/leptospirosis.shtml>)
* Federal CDC Leptospirosis website <http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/>