



American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo
Warden Message



TO: Consular Wardens
FROM: ACS Unit
DATE: 20 November 2007
SUBJECT: Leptospirosis Outbreak

This warden message is to alert U.S. citizens residing and traveling in the Dominican Republic to an outbreak of Leptospirosis. Please circulate this to your constituents.

There has been an outbreak of leptospirosis in the Dominican Republic as a result of the recent Tropical Storm Noel. The Ministry of Health reports 25 dead and nearly 200 cases countrywide as of November 19, 2007. Many of the cases are in Santo Domingo.

People who are working in flooded regions and those who are exposed to contaminated water are at risk for this disease.

Leptospirosis is caused by a germ that is commonly carried in animals. Water, food, or soil may become contaminated with urine from infected animals. Humans become infected through swallowing contaminated food or water. Infection can also occur through skin contact with contaminated water or soil; mucosal surfaces such as the eyes or nose, or broken skin are most vulnerable. The disease is not known to be spread from person-to-person.

The symptoms of leptospirosis include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea. These symptoms can be similar to those of other tropical diseases. Other tropical diseases that may cause similar symptoms include malaria, dengue fever, and typhoid. These symptoms can worsen if not treated early. Worsening symptoms include jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), kidney failure, and heavy bleeding. A person can have the leptospirosis germ in their body for 7 days before they feel sick. However, illness can develop any time from a few days to a few weeks after exposure. Antibiotics are used to treat leptospirosis and are most helpful if taken early during illness.

Recommendations for Travelers

- To reduce the risk of getting sick with leptospirosis and other diseases, all persons should minimize contact with potentially contaminated water, food, or soil.
- People working in flood regions should wear protective clothing and cover cuts and abrasions with waterproof bandages.

- People who will be spending a lot of time in the flooded areas should talk with their doctor about taking antibiotics to help prevent leptospirosis.
- Travelers are reminded to avoid swimming or wading in lakes, ponds, rivers, and other sources of freshwater, especially water that might be contaminated with animal urine.
- People who think they have leptospirosis should seek immediate medical care for diagnosis and treatment.
- Any traveler should seek professional medical care if he or she becomes ill, especially with fever and other flu-like symptoms. Inform your health-care provider about your recent travel.

We recommend that travelers to the Dominican Republic visit the [CDC Travelers' Health](#) website and the [U.S. Department of State](#) website for further updates.

For additional information see:

- [Leptospirosis](#) in *CDC Health Information for International Travel 2008*
<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh4-Leptospirosis.aspx>
- [Leptospirosis Frequently Asked Questions](#) (CDC's Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases). http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_g.htm

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith/en>.

For any emergencies involving American citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Embassy. The Consular Section Embassy is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue, Santo Domingo, D.R.; telephone 809-731-4294; after hours emergency telephone 809-221-2171; ACS unit fax 809-689-6142; e-mail acssantodom@state.gov; web page www.usemb.gov.do.