Condition explainer

KSUMC · Internal Medicine

Brucellosis

What it is, how you catch it, and how to protect yourself

Malta fever

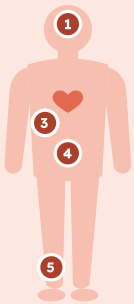


WHAT IS BRUCELLOSIS?

Brucellosis is an infection caused by bacteria, caught from animals that carry them. Most people recover fully, but the infection can sometimes come back.[1,3]

Common symptoms

1. Headache
2. Fever that rises and falls in waves
3. Sweating and extreme tiredness
4. Belly pain and loss of appetite
5. Joint, muscle and back pain



How do people catch it?

- Raw milk, and fresh cheese made from it, are the main source.[2]
- Eating raw or undercooked meat from an infected animal.[2]
- Cattle, goats, camels, dogs and pigs can carry it, even if they look healthy.[1,2]
- It very rarely spreads from person to person.[3]

How it is treated

It is treated with antibiotics. They clear the infection and help stop it coming back. Getting cured can take from a few weeks to several months. If there are complications, you will likely need the medicines for longer.[1,2]

What you can do

- Finish the whole antibiotic course, even if you start to feel better.[3]
- If milk is not pasteurised, boil it well first.[2]
- Do not eat raw or undercooked meat.[3]
- Wash your hands before and after handling animals.[2]
- If you work with animals, wear gloves, protective clothing and glasses.[2]
- See your doctor if your symptoms get worse or do not improve with treatment.[1]

Drink and eat only pasteurised milk and dairy products. This is the most important way to prevent brucellosis. There is no vaccine for people.[1,2]

SOURCES

1. MedlinePlus — Brucellosis
2. Saudi Ministry of Health — Brucellosis (Malta Fever)
3. NHS — Brucellosis

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY

Yazeed Alekrish
Doctor
Reviewed on: 2026-11-14 · Version 1

Scan for the latest version

This sheet is for education. It does not replace advice from your doctor.