

THE FACTS ABOUT MELIOIDOSIS

#TheBigWet

Townsville
Hospital
and Health
Service

Melioidosis is caused by an uncommon soil bacteria that is present in tropical north Australia. Melioidosis infection usually presents as pneumonia, with or without septicaemia (blood poisoning caused by bacteria or their toxins) and can be fatal.

The Risk of Melioidosis infection

- Melioidosis is a rare tropical disease
- Most cases are in elderly and sick patients whose immunity may be decreased
- Infection may occur when wounds have direct contact with contaminated soil or surface water
- Transmission may also occur via inhalation of contaminated water
- Melioidosis does not spread from person to person.

Symptoms may include

- Infection of lungs, from mild bronchitis to severe pneumonia
- Fever, headache, loss of appetite, cough, chest pain and general muscle soreness. These may represent septicaemia
- Sometimes localised swelling, skin abscesses or ulcers, abscesses in internal organs such as prostate, spleen, kidney and liver
- Symptoms usually develop within three weeks of exposure.

Preventive measures

- Avoid contact with soil or muddy water, particularly after floods
- Wear footwear and gloves while working outdoors after a heavy rain or flood event
- Wash any wounds, apply antiseptic then a waterproof dressing and keep the wound out of dirt and water
- Take care of your feet and prevent contamination of sores
- If your wound is exposed to muddy water, wash your skin thoroughly. Seek medical attention.

For further information see your doctor or health clinic

Call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for qualified health advice anytime

www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/recovery-after-disaster/cleaning-up