



Health, Housing, and Community Services Department

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HEALTH ADVISORY

Leptospirosis — Clinical Guidance for City of Berkeley Medical Providers

June 10, 2026

ALERT – conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

ADVISORY – provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

UPDATE – provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Key messages

- This advisory updates and adds clinical guidance to the City of Berkeley Public Health Division [Health Alert dated January 12, 2026](#).¹ This January 12th alert was focused on communicating with the general public regarding the Harrison street encampment and cases of canine Leptospirosis there. Now, updates have been included to this Alert describing efforts to mitigate the rat population and provide guidance to the dog and human populations at that encampment and surrounding neighborhood.
- In May 2026, the first two known cases of Leptospirosis in humans in the City of Berkeley in over a decade were identified.
- The two patients had contact with a large number of rats in an RV where they resided. Delayed access to medical care likely contributed to death in one of the two patients. This RV was located approximately one mile from the Harrison street encampment, where there has been documented Leptospirosis in rats and associated illness in dogs.
- If providers encounter patients presenting with exposure to rats and symptoms consistent with Leptospirosis, please consider commercial lab testing for Leptospirosis and antibiotic treatment including possible hospital level care as described in this advisory. Signs and symptoms of Leptospirosis include fever

¹ https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/January_12%2C_2026_Lepto_Health_Alert_Final.pdf

and chills, headache, myalgias, conjunctivitis, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, cough and jaundice.

- The likely source of Leptospirosis for these two human cases was direct exposure to infected rats, and their urine. There is no human-to-human spread of this disease.
- Educating the community is an important aspect of this response. Please find attached an educational flyer for individuals living in conditions with rat exposure.

Attachments: Lepto Educational Flyer English and Spanish

Background

Leptospirosis is a serious but uncommon bacterial infection in the United States, where approximately 100–150 cases are reported annually. The primary reservoir for this disease is rats. There is no known risk of human-to-human transmission. It is caused by spirochete bacteria of the genus *Leptospira*, with more than 250 pathogenic serovars. Worldwide, an estimated 1 million cases and 60,000 deaths occur annually, predominantly in tropical regions. In California, leptospirosis is rare. Leptospirosis most often spreads through contact with rats or with soil or water that has been contaminated with the urine of infected animals such as rodents, dogs, livestock, and other wildlife. Leptospire can enter the body through cuts, scrapes, or mucous membranes.

In May 2026, the City of Berkeley Public Health Division confirmed two cases of leptospirosis in humans. These are the first known human cases in the City of Berkeley in over a decade. Both individuals had been living in an enclosed, heavily rat-infested RV. After being transported by ambulance to the hospital, one patient died from severe Leptospirosis (likely Weil's disease); the second has recovered. The RV where these patients were living has been towed and destroyed and the rats exterminated. This advisory is intended to support early recognition, testing, and treatment of Leptospirosis.

Transmission

High-risk activities include wading or swimming in contaminated water, direct contact with rodents or their urine or environments, and activities that may cause skin abrasions in the setting of exposure to soil or water where there are rat infestations.

Leptospirosis does **not** spread person-to-person and is **not** airborne.

When to Suspect Leptospirosis — High-Risk Exposures

Maintain heightened clinical suspicion in patients with compatible symptoms and any of the following:

- People experiencing homelessness (PEH) living in tents, RVs, or settings with known or suspected rat infestation or where sanitation is lacking;
- Anyone reporting close contact with rats, rodents, or rodent-infested environments;
- Mucous membrane or open skin exposure to potentially contaminated water, mud, puddles, or standing water

Clinical Presentation

Incubation period: 2–30 days; most cases present 5–14 days after exposure. Most infections are asymptomatic or mild. Approximately 10% of acute infections progress to severe, potentially fatal illness. Illness may be **biphasic** — a patient may briefly improve before deteriorating significantly.

Common Symptoms	Severe Leptospirosis (which can include Weil's disease)
Fever and chills	Acute kidney injury or oliguria
Severe headache	Jaundice with markedly elevated bilirubin but only mildly elevated transaminases*
Myalgias, especially calf and lower back pain	Pulmonary hemorrhage or respiratory failure
Conjunctival suffusion (without discharge)	Coagulopathy / hemorrhage
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain	Aseptic meningitis or cardiac arrhythmias
Cough	Multi-organ failure (5–10% of cases)
Jaundice	
Rash (variable)	

*** Key diagnostic clue:** *The liver function test results associated with Weil's disease differ from acetaminophen toxicity and viral hepatitis, where transaminases predominate. Do not let an alternative diagnosis prevent testing when exposure history is present.*

Case fatality rate: 5–15% in severe illness. Among patients with severe pulmonary hemorrhagic syndrome, case fatality can exceed 50%.

Laboratory Testing

All *Leptospirosis* testing needed for clinical diagnosis is available through commercial labs. **Do not wait for results before initiating treatment when clinical suspicion is high.** Submit as many specimen types as possible. A negative PCR does not completely rule out *Leptospirosis* due to the transient presence of *Leptospira* bacteria in body fluids. If *Leptospirosis* is diagnosed, public health will work with the commercial lab to arrange additional testing to assist with public health investigations.

Phase of Illness	Recommended Specimens	Tests
First week of illness (acute)	Whole blood and serum	PCR (whole blood, ideal in first 4 days) IgM serology (ELISA, ImmunoDOT, lateral flow) for screening only*
After first week (convalescent)	Serum and urine	PCR (urine) IgM serology MAT (microscopic agglutination test)
Confirmatory (any phase)	Acute + convalescent serum (7–14 days apart) Fresh frozen kidney/liver (deceased patients) CSF if meningitis suspected	

*** IgM assays are screening tests only and must be confirmed by MAT or PCR. Antibodies develop 3–10 days after symptom onset. Please note negative serology in the first week does not rule out disease.**

Treatment

Early testing and treatment, including possible need for hospital level care, is the most important factor in preventing severe disease and death. Collect specimens for testing in a commercial lab and **initiate antibiotics immediately when Leptospirosis is clinically suspected—do not wait for laboratory confirmation.**

Severity	Drug of Choice	Alternatives
Mild to Moderate	Doxycycline 100 mg PO twice daily × 7 days	Azithromycin 500 mg PO daily × 3 days Amoxicillin 500 mg PO q6h × 7 days Ampicillin 500–750 mg PO q6h × 7 days
Severe (Weil's disease)	IV Penicillin G 1.5 million units IV q6h	Ceftriaxone 1 g IV q24h

Full CDC treatment guidance and CDC Clinician Fact Sheet:
[cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pdf/fs-leptospirosis-clinicians-eng-508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pdf/fs-leptospirosis-clinicians-eng-508.pdf)

CDC Clinical Overview for Providers: [cdc.gov/leptospirosis/hcp/clinical-overview/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/hcp/clinical-overview/index.html)

Surveillance and Reporting

- **Leptospirosis is a public health (Title 17) notifiable disease.**
- Please report all confirmed and probable human cases to the City of Berkeley Communicable Disease Program.

Phone: (510) 981-5292, Monday–Friday 9:00am–5:00pm

- Fax: (510) 981-5345
- Email: COBCD@berkeleyca.gov

Actions Requested of City of Berkeley Providers Regarding Human Cases of Leptospirosis

- **Suspect Leptospirosis** in any patient with compatible symptoms and a history of exposure to rats, rodent-infested environments, or potentially contaminated water or soil.
- **Test early** using PCR and serology through commercial labs. Submit multiple specimen types.
- **Treat empirically** when clinical suspicion is high — do not await confirmatory results.

Issued by the City of Berkeley Public Health Division

Noemi Doohan, MD, PhD, MPH — Public Health Officer-Director, City of Berkeley



June 10, 2026

RV and Encampment Occupants: Rat Advisory

Keep food and water in closed containers; avoid exposure to wild rats; seek treatment quickly

Wild rats carry a variety of diseases. People and dogs can get infected through contact with wild rats and their urine, feces, saliva, bites or scratches. Rats can also carry ticks, mites, or fleas that can spread diseases. Do not poison rats as they often wander into open areas before dying. These Carcasses can be deadly to pets or wildlife.

Rat-borne diseases are monitored around encampments in the City of Berkeley by Alameda County Vector Control and include the following:

- Leptospirosis
- Flea borne typhus
- Salmonellosis

TAKE STEPS TO LOWER RISK

The best way to prevent transmission of disease by rats in your area is to:

- Keep food and water in closed containers
- Minimize trash and items that could create rat nests
- Avoid exposure to rats or their body fluids

IF YOU DO NOT FEEL WELL, SEEK TREATMENT QUICKLY

If you have been around or in contact with rats AND you feel sick, get medical help quickly and inform your medical provider that you have been exposed to wild rats.

If you do not have a Primary Care Provider or are a LifeLong Medical Care Patient:

- Call: Berkeley Trust Health Center (510) 486-3463
- Operating Hours:
 - Monday-Friday 8:30am -4:30pm, except Tuesday when hours are 10:00am-4:30pm
 - 830 University Ave, Berkeley, CA (Near the corner of University Ave and Sixth Street)

For questions contact the City of Berkeley Lepto information line: (510) 981-5460



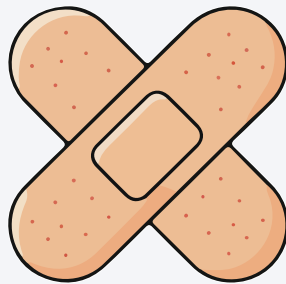
Leptospirosis: Recommendations for the general public in northwest Berkeley

Guidance for people with access to indoor shelter, running water, secure garbage and safe food storage who also live or work in the area generally bounded by Codornices Creek, Gilman Street, San Pablo Avenue and the railroad tracks

Leptospirosis is a sickness caused by bacteria that lives in water that can spread to people and dogs. You can get it from water, dirt, or food that was infected by the urine of infected rats or dogs



Wear protective clothing



Cover scratches or cuts with waterproof bandages



Don't wade or swim in potentially contaminated water



Wash or shower after potential exposure



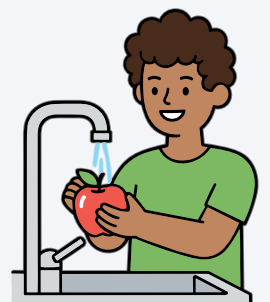
Clean your wounds



Don't touch sick or dead animals



Consume clear, clean, drinking-water



Wash fruits and vegetables picked from gardens or farms in this area

Leptospirosis is treatable. The disease is transmitted to humans and animals when the contaminated water touches mucous membranes – such as eyes, nose, mouth, or cuts to the skin. Most people have no symptoms. However, if you think you were exposed in this area and have flu-like symptoms – fever, chills, headache, red eyes, and muscle aches – contact your primary care provider, such as the one listed on your Medi-Cal card for an urgent appointment.

If you do not have a medical provider, contact Lifelong Trust Health Center for screening and treatment

 830 University Ave., Berkeley, CA 94710

Berkeley Public Health Leptospirosis voicemail to leave tips, questions: 510.981.5460, leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov

Updated June 3, 2026



Leptospirosis Pet Owner Safety Guide

LEPTOSPIROSIS BACTERIA LIVES IN WATER CONTAMINATED BY THE URINE OF RATS. INFECTION OCCURS THROUGH MUCOUS MEMBRANES, SUCH AS THE NOSE, MOUTH, EYES, OR OPEN WOUNDS.

PREVENT THE SPREAD

- **WASH HANDS AFTER TOUCHING PETS OR THEIR THINGS.**
- **NO FACE LICKING.**
- **USE ANTIBACTERIAL SPRAYS OR WIPES.**
- **SUNLIGHT KILLS GERMS—KEEP LIVING SPACE CLEAR OF WET DEBRIS.**



- **VACCINATE DOGS (4-WAY LEPTO).**
- **CONTROL RODENTS—SEAL TRASH, REMOVE FOOD BOWLS.**
- **GIVE FRESH WATER ONLY—NO PUDDLES OR CREEKS.**



IF YOUR PET HAS LEPTO

- **GIVE ALL MEDICINE AS PRESCRIBED.**
- **WEAR GLOVES WHEN CLEANING PEE.**
- **PICK A SUNNY POTTY SPOT AWAY FROM GARDENS AND PUDDLES.**
- **NO POWER WASHING—USE GENTLE RINSE AFTER DISINFECTING.**
- **WASH BEDDING IN HOT WATER WITH DETERGENT AND BLEACH.**
- **IF PREGNANT OR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED, AVOID CLEANING UP AFTER A SICK PET FOR 2 WEEKS.**



Stay Safe. Protect Your Pets. Protect Your Family.



10 de junio de 2026

Ocupantes de viviendas recreativas (RV) y campamentos: Advertencia sobre ratas

Mantenga los alimentos y el agua en recipientes cerrados; evite la exposición a las ratas silvestres; busque tratamiento rápidamente.

Las ratas silvestres portan una variedad de enfermedades. Las personas y los perros pueden infectarse a través del contacto con las ratas silvestres y su orina, heces, saliva, mordeduras o arañazos. Las ratas también pueden portar garrapatas, ácaros o pulgas que pueden propagar enfermedades. No envenene a las ratas, ya que a menudo deambulan por áreas abiertas antes de morir. Estos cadáveres pueden ser mortales para las mascotas o la fauna silvestre.

Las enfermedades transmitidas por ratas son monitoreadas alrededor de los campamentos en la Ciudad de Berkeley por el Control de Vectores del Condado de Alameda e incluyen las siguientes:

- Leptospirosis
- Tifus transmitido por pulgas
- Salmonelosis

TOMAR LAS SIGUIENTES MEDIDAS PARA REDUCIR EL RIESGO

La mejor manera de prevenir la transmisión de enfermedades a través de las ratas en su área es

- Mantener los alimentos y el agua en recipientes cerrados
- Evitar el acumulamiento de basura y los objetos que puedan crear nidos de ratas
- Evite contacto con las ratas silvestres y su orina o heces

SI NO SE SIENTE BIEN, BUSQUE TRATAMIENTO RAPIDAMENTE

Si ha estado cerca o en contacto con ratas Y se siente enfermo, busque ayuda médica rápidamente e informe a su médico de cabecera que ha estado expuesto a ratas silvestres.

Si no tiene un médico de cabecera o si es paciente de LifeLong Mendical Care Patient:

- Llame: Berkeley Trust Health Center (510) 486-3463
- Horario de Atención:
 - Lunes-viernes 8:30am -4:30pm, **excepto los martes** que las horas de atención son de 10:00am-4:30pm
 - 830 University Ave, Berkeley, CA (cerca a la esquina de University Ave and Sixth Street)

Si tiene preguntas, comuníquese con la línea de información sobre Leptospirosis de la Ciudad de Berkeley: (510) 981-5460



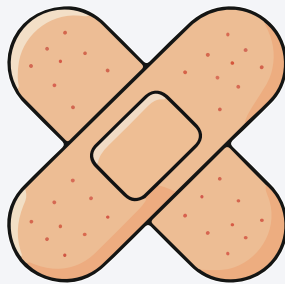
Leptospirosis: Recomendaciones para el público general en el noroeste de Berkeley

Guía para personas que viven, trabajan o tienen acceso a refugio interior en el área delimitada generalmente por Codornices Creek, Gilman Street, San Pablo Avenue y las vías del tren y tienen acceso a agua potable, recolección de basura regular y almacenamiento seguro de alimentos.

La leptospirosis es una enfermedad causada por bacterias que viven en el agua y que puede contagiarse a personas y perros. Se puede contraer a través del agua, lodo o los alimentos contaminados por la orina de ratas o perros infectados.



Vista ropa protectora.



Cubra rasguños o cortes con vendajes impermeables.



No camine ni nade en agua que podría estar contaminada.



Lávese las manos o báñese tras un posible contagio.



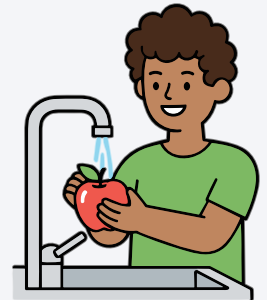
Limpie sus lesiones o rasguños



No toque a los animales que estén enfermos o muertos.



Beba agua potable limpia y transparente.



Lave las frutas y verduras cosechadas de huertos o granjas de esta zona.

La leptospirosis es una enfermedad tratable. Se transmite a humanos y animales cuando el agua contaminada entra en contacto con las membranas mucosas, como los ojos, la nariz, la boca, cortes o rasguños en la piel. La mayoría de las personas no presentan síntomas. Sin embargo, si sospecha haber estado expuesto en esta área y tiene síntomas similares a los de la gripe (fiebre, escalofríos, dolor de cabeza, ojos rojos y dolores musculares), comuníquese con su médico de cabecera o plan de seguro médico como el que aparece en su tarjeta de Medi-Cal para programar una cita urgente.

Si no tiene seguro médico o médico de cabecera, comuníquese con el Centro de Salud Lifelong Trust para evaluación y tratamiento. El centro está ubicado en la University Avenue 830, Berkeley, CA 94710

Para dejar alertas o pedir más información sobre leptospirosis deje un mensaje de voz en la línea directa de la oficina de Salud Pública de Berkeley llamando a 510.981.5460 o por correo electrónico leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov

Actualizado el 3 de junio de 2026



Leptospirosis

Guía de seguridad para dueños de mascotas



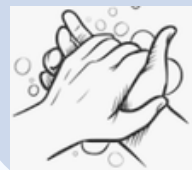
- **VACUNE A SU PERRO (LEPTO 4 VARIANTES).**
- **CONTROLE LOS ROEDORES: SELLE LOS BASUREROS Y RETIRE LOS PLATOS DE COMIDA.**
- **DE A SU MASCOTA AGUA LIMPIA. NO PERMITA QUE TOMA AGUA DE CHARCOS O RIACHUELOS.**



LAS BACTERIA DE LA LEPTOSPIROSIS VIVEN EN AGUA CONTAMINADA POR LA ORINA DE LAS RATAS. LA INFECCIÓN OCURRE A TRAVÉS DE LAS MEMBRANAS MUCOSAS, COMO LA NARIZ, LA BOCA, LOS OJOS O HERIDAS ABIERTAS.

EVITAR LA PROPAGACIÓN

- **LÁVESE LAS MANOS DESPUES DE TOCAR A LAS MASCOTAS O SUS COSAS (JUGUETES, COBIJAS, ETC.)**
- **EVITE QUE SU MASCOTA LE LAMA LA CARA.**
- **USE AEROSOLIOS O TOALLITAS DESINFECTANTES ANTIBACTERIANAS.**
- **LA LUZ DEL SOL MATA LOS GÉRMENES; MANTENGA EL ENTORNO LIBRE DE DESECHOS HÚMEDOS.**



SI SU MASCOTA SE CONTAGIA DE LEPTOSPIROSIS

- **DE A SU MASCOTA TODOS LOS REMEDIOS SIGUIENDO LAS INSTRUCCIONES EN LA RECETA.**
- **USE GUANTES AL LIMPIAR LA ORINA.**
- **ELIJA UN LUGAR SOLEADO PARA QUE SU MASCOTA HAGA SUS NECESIDADES, ALEJADO DE JARDINES Y CHARCOS.**
- **NO USE LAVADORAS A PRESIÓN: USE UN ENJUAGUE SUAVE DESPUÉS DE DESINFECTAR EL ÁREA.**
- **LAVE COBIJAS CON AGUA CALIENTE, DETERGENTE Y LEJÍA/CLORO.**
- **SI ESTA EMBARAZADA O INMUNOCOMPROMETIDO, EVITE LIMPIAR LOS DESECHOS DE UNA MASCOTA ENFERMA DURANTE DE 2 SEMANAS.**

Manténgase saludable . Cuide a sus mascotas. Cuide a su familia.