

## WEIL'S DISEASE (leptospirosis)

<b>What is it?</b>	<p>Weil's Disease is a form of bacterial infection carried by animals (most commonly rats and cattle).</p> <p><b>It is rare in the UK and human infection levels are minimal.</b></p>
<b>How dangerous is it?</b>	<p>If left untreated Weil's Disease can cause kidney &amp; liver failure and in rare cases heart &amp; respiratory failure.</p>
<b>How could I catch it?</b>	<p><b>Weil's Disease can be contracted by coming into contact with animal urine or water that has been contaminated by it, usually via an open wound on your hands or feet.</b></p> <p><b>Rats (and cattle) sometimes live close to rivers and riverbanks so kayakers, swimmers and paddle boarders can be at more risk than others.</b></p> <p>You cannot contract Weil's Disease from swallowing water or from a rat bite.</p>
<b>What precautions can I take?</b>	<p><b>Cover any open wounds (cuts and scratches) with a waterproof plaster prior to entering the water.</b></p> <p>Wash thoroughly as soon as you can after leaving the water.</p> <p>Carefully clean any new open wounds gained during your time on the water.</p>
<b>What are the symptoms?</b>	<p>Symptoms can occur between 3 and 21 days from contamination and there are two distinct phases.</p>
<b>First Phase</b>	<p><b>Similar to flu : fever, severe headache, chills, vomiting, muscle aches and may include a rash.</b></p> <p>May last 3-5 days before recovery.</p> <p>In mild cases patients should recover after First Phase but may suffer fatigue/depression for some time afterwards.</p>
<b>Second Phase</b>	<p>Initial symptoms will recur and further symptoms may vary according to the severity of the infection and may include <b>jaundice (yellow skin &amp; eyes), red eyes, abdominal pain &amp; diarrhoea.</b></p> <p>Symptoms can also be similar to those of meningitis.</p>
<b>What do I do if I have symptoms?</b>	<p>Seek medical treatment &amp; explain you have been in contact with open water. Early diagnosis &amp; treatment is important.</p> <p>Weil's Disease is normally treated with antibiotics.</p>