

WHAT IS CAT SCRATCH DISEASE?

Cat Scratch Disease (CSD), also known as *cat scratch fever* or *human bartonellosis*, is a disease of humans, not of cats. Although a cat scratch is often associated with the disease, a microorganism called *Bartonella hensalae* is the most common cause of the CSD. Cats that carry *B. hensalae* do not show any signs of illness; therefore, cannot tell which cats can spread the disease.

HOW CAN I PREVENT CONTRACTING CSD?

- Keep your cat's nails trimmed short
- Keep all your pets on year-round flea control
- Keep your cat indoors
- Avoid rough play with your cat
- Wash any bites or scratches immediately with soap or disinfectant



CAT SCRATCH DISEASE



HOW DO CATS & HUMANS BECOME INFECTED?

The term cat scratch disease incorrectly implies that cats are the only source of transmission and infection. Although cats are a major reservoir for *B. hensalae* and other *Bartonella* species that can cause human disease, some people infected with CSD have no history of a cat scratch or bite wound. In these people, transmission from environmental sources, various biting insects, or other animal hosts is likely.

The major route of cat infection with *B. hensalae* is by a flea bite. Infected cats carry the microorganism in their blood. A primary concern is that a cat bitten by a *B. hensalae*-infected flea will leave excrement on the cat that can be transmitted to humans and cause the disease. Cats remain infectious for a few weeks, after which the organism disappears from the blood. It is not clear whether cats can become reinfected.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS IN HUMANS?

Most common symptoms:

- Mild fever
- Chills
- Lethargy
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Lesions on skin or conjunctiva

In immunocompromised persons, severe symptoms can include:

- Arthritis
- Enlarged spleen or liver
- High fever
- Pneumonia
- Weight loss

WHAT STEPS DO I TAKE IF I THINK I HAVE CSD?

The disease is typically self-limiting, and the majority of mild cases will resolve without the need for antibiotics. If severe symptoms appear, see your healthcare provider immediately.