

# ***WEIL'S DISEASE***

## ***& LEPTOSPIROSIS***

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by organisms in animal droppings – particularly the urine of the rat. Some very few cases also develop jaundice, when the condition is known as **WEIL'S DISEASE**. If this happens 15% of patients may die. Death without jaundice is virtually unknown. It is **extremely** rare to catch Leptospirosis and even more rare that this develops into Weil's disease. You are extremely unlikely and would be very unlucky to develop Weil's disease through canoeing the central Thames.

Leptospirosis is caught by direct contact with rats urine or a polluted environment through skin abrasions or via eyes, nose or mouth. The bacteria can survive for days or even weeks in moist conditions. – but are killed outright by salt water.

### **BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY**

Prevention being better than a cure you should cut down even the tiniest risk by:

- ✦ **COVERING ALL CUTS AND GRAZES WITH WATERPROOF STICKING PLASTER BEFORE TAKING TO THE WATER**
- ✦ **ALWAYS WEARING FOOTWEAR TO AVOID CUTTING THE FEET**
- ✦ **AVOID CAPSIZE DRILL OR ROLLING IN SLOW MOVING OR STAGNANT WATER**
- ✦ **ALWAYS SHOWER AFTER WATERSPORTS**
- ✦ **IF IN DOUBT CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR EARLY**

The usual incubation period is 2 - 12 days. The symptoms are a flu-like illness. There may be fever, headaches and pains in the back and calves. If you fall ill with these symptoms tell your doctor that there may be a risk of Leptospirosis. A blood test through the microbiologist at your local hospital is the quickest way of getting confirmation. Your doctor is unlikely to be able to confirm the illness in time without a blood test. Antibiotics during the first few days help limit infection. Many cases recover without specific treatment.

***LEPTOSPIROSIS AND WEIL'S DISEASE ARE REALLY INFECTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS. WATERSPORTS PARTICIPANTS ARE AT MOST RISK WHEN THEY ARE ON THE BANKS OF RIVERS AND CANALS AND PLACES WHERE RATS URINE MAY PUDDLE. BUT NO ONE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF BEING SAFE.***

**➔ BASIC PRECAUTIONS WILL REDUCE YOUR RISK ←**

***IF YOU ARE AWARE OF A RAT POPULATION WHEREVER YOU UNDERTAKE WATER SPORTS THEN CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL AND INSIST SOMETHING IS DONE***