

NYC officials: 1 person dies, 2 ill from rat-related disease

February 15 2017

New York City health department officials are targeting a Bronx neighborhood after one person died and two others became severely ill from contracting a rare disease transmitted by rats.

The three cases of [leptospirosis](#) occurred in the last two months within a one block radius.

Although New York City typically gets one to three cases of leptospirosis every year, city officials said it's the first time a cluster of cases has been identified.

"This illness can be serious but is treatable with readily available antibiotics," [health officials](#) said in a statement.

Infections commonly occur through exposure to rat urine. It can be contracted through open wounds and cuts in the skin, or through the eyes, nose or mouth. The disease is rarely spread from person to person.

The city said it's reducing the rat population in the area and educating residents about the disease.

Twenty-six cases of leptospirosis were reported in New York City between 2006 and 2016, according to health department figures.

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