

# Nipah

## What is Nipah and what causes it?

Nipah (nee-pa) is a recently (1999) discovered viral disease that can affect people and animals. Severe respiratory disease, encephalitis, even death can result. Outbreaks of Nipah have only been reported in Southeast Asia (i.e., Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Bangladesh).

## What animals get Nipah virus infection?

Pigs are the primary animal species affected by Nipah virus. Dogs, goats, cats, horses and possibly sheep can also be infected. The virus is thought to be maintained in nature by "flying foxes" (type of fruit bat), which show no signs of infection.

## How can my animal get Nipah?

Pigs become infected through contact or ingestion (**oral**) of objects or materials contaminated by the urine, feces or saliva from infected (carrier) flying foxes. The virus can also spread between pigs by **direct contact** and by **aerosol**.

Other animal species become infected by having contact with sick pigs or objects contaminated with the virus.

## How does Nipah affect my animal?

Pigs infected with Nipah virus will have rapid and difficult breathing pattern. They may also have open-mouthed breathing and a characteristic loud, harsh cough. Fever is common. The nervous system may also be affected, so signs such as trembling, muscle spasms, lameness, and incoordination may be seen. Sudden death can occur.

## Can I get Nipah?

Yes. Human illness can vary from no signs of illness to death. Infection most commonly occurs from close contact with infected pigs. Initially flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache and muscle pain, are seen. This may be followed by neurological signs such as disorientation, dizziness. During the 1998-1999 epidemic in Malaysia, 40-50% of the human cases resulted in death.

Recent cases of Nipah virus in Bangladesh, have been transmitted from person-to-person following very close contact with infected individuals. It is thought that the outbreak initially started when children ate fruit contaminated by the saliva and urine of fruit bats.

## Who should I contact, if I suspect Nipah?

### In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian immediately.

### In Humans –

Contact your physician immediately.

## How can I protect my animal from Nipah?

Nipah virus outbreaks in pigs have only occurred in Malaysia and Singapore. Since Nipah virus is newly discovered, there is still much to learn about this virus, including the way it is spread and how to best prevent it.

The best prevention advice at this time is to prevent pigs from having contact with fruit bats, and to prevent other animals from coming into contact with Nipah virus-infected pigs.

## How can I protect myself from Nipah?

For people, the best prevention measures include avoiding contact with animals which could be infected with Nipah. You should also avoid eating fruit that may have been contaminated with saliva or urine from fruit bats.

## For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Nipah at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/default.htm>

CDC website. Nipah Virus Disease at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/spb/mnpages/dispages/nipah.htm>

