

Dear parents,

Water activities – information on Weil's Disease

Your son/daughter has been taking part in water activities. One of the risks associated with water activities is exposure to Weils Disease, *the risk is very low and there is no cause for concern*. The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of the *potential* for infection and of the symptoms to look out for, this awareness is part of our risk assessment for the activity. Weil's Disease is **rare** and the risk of contracting it is very low (typically less than 25-30 cases per year are reported in the UK as a result of recreational activities). If caught, the disease can be treated with antibiotics.

What is Weils Disease?

Weil's disease is a human form of Leptospirosis. This is a bacterial infection carried in the urine of a variety of wild and domestic animals, including rats, which can contaminate water and river banks. The bacteria do not survive long in dry conditions.

How can it be caught?

Human infection occurs through exposure to contaminated water. The bacteria are absorbed through the skin and through the mucous membranes of the eyes and mouth. It can get into your bloodstream more easily if you have a cut on your skin.

How serious is it?

Weil's disease can cause serious illness requiring hospital treatment and can lead to kidney or liver failure. Weil's disease is consequently a notifiable illness.

What should I look out for?

The early symptoms are similar to "Flu" including a temperature, severe head-ache and muscle pains (especially in the calf muscles). Other symptoms include conjunctivitis and/or jaundice.

If your son/daughter experiences any of these symptoms within 3 weeks of taking part in water activities you should see your doctor and request a blood test for Weil's disease, tell them you have been involved in water sports and show them this information.

If you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of the leadership team.

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