



Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club

www.cvcc.org.uk

WEIL'S DISEASE

What is it?

Weil's disease is a bacterial infection carried in rats, cattle, foxes, rodents and other wild animals urine which contaminates water and wet river banks. The bacteria can be present wherever there are rats in the wild for example, a shed, garage, or building. The bacteria do not survive for long in dry conditions

How serious is it?

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

How can I catch it?

The bacteria are absorbed through the skin and mucous membranes of the mouth and eyes. It gets into the blood stream more easily if you have a minor cut on your skin or if you do capsized drill or rolling.

What are the symptoms and what should I do about it?

The most common symptoms include –

- headache
- fever and chills
- severe muscle aches and tenderness
- redness of the eyes
- loss of appetite
- vomiting
- sometimes a skin rash

If you fall ill with any of these symptoms after canoeing, or after being in a wet area known particularly to contain rats, within 3 to 19 days after 'exposure' then it is essential that you see your doctor as soon as possible. Tell your doctor that you have been canoeing or in a possibly infected place, be specific about where that place is, and then ask for a blood test for Weil's disease. Tell the British Canoe Union (BCU) who will let their medical panel know about it.

Help protect yourself by washing your hands before eating after canoeing and taking a shower as soon as possible after paddling. Ensure that all of the kit you have used is also washed fully and hung up to dry.