



Lincoln Canoe Club

LEPTOSPIROSIS AND WATER SPORTS

WHAT IS LEPTOSPIROSIS?

This is an animal infection, but after recovery the animal continues to excrete the organisms in the urine. These survive for days or even weeks in moist conditions, but only for a few hours in salt water. Humans catch the infection by direct contact with the urine or urine polluted environment. Bacteria enter through skin abrasions or via the eyes, nose or mouth.

THE ILLNESS

The usual incubation period is 7 to 12 days. Normally 'flu-like' illness occurs which resolves in 2 – 3 weeks. There may be a fever, severe headache, and pains in the back, calves and prostration. A few cases develop Jaundice, when the condition is known as Weil's disease.

Although death may occur in about 15% of the jaundiced patients, death without jaundice is virtually unknown. Antibiotics during the first few days may help limit the infection, though many cases recover without specific treatment.

WHAT TO DO

If you think you have the infection, go to your doctor and tell him or her that there may be a risk of Leptospirosis through your canoeing activities.

The diagnosis is by clinical suspicion as blood tests rarely confirm the illness in time to affect treatment, though they may subsequently confirm it.

The microbiologist at your local hospital is the best source of advice.

PREVENTION

1. Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters
2. Always wear footwear to avoid cutting the foot
3. Avoid excessive capsizing drills or rolling practice on inland waters
4. Shower as soon as possible after canoeing
5. If in doubt consult your doctor early

Remember – simple precautions can reduce your risk.

Leptospirosis Notice Revision history

Rev	Date	By	Details of change
0	Feb 2009	RG	Initial issue.
1	06-03-2012	JB	Removed preamble.
2	02-06-2015	DJM	Added club logo and revision history.
3	27/6/2017	DJM	New logo
4	21/11/21	DM	Changed to Watersports to be inclusive