

## 4 Tips to Keep Safe from Flea-Borne Typhus

Read the tips below to learn how you can keep your family and pets safe from flea-borne typhus.

### Tip #1:

Stop wild animals, especially opossums and stray or feral cats, from sleeping or hiding near your home.

### Tip #2:

Stop wild animals, especially opossums and stray or feral cats, from finding food near your home.

### Tip #3:

Use flea control products for your pets, yard, and home.

### Tip #4:

Protect yourself when cleaning animal resting and bedding areas.

## Who do I call if I need more information?

If your doctor has questions about Flea-borne Typhus, call:

- Acute Communicable Disease Program: (213) 240-7941

If you have concerns regarding your pets, call:

- Veterinary Public Health: (213) 989-7060

If you think you have an opossum or rodent problem, call:

- Environmental Health Vector Control Program: (562) 570-4132

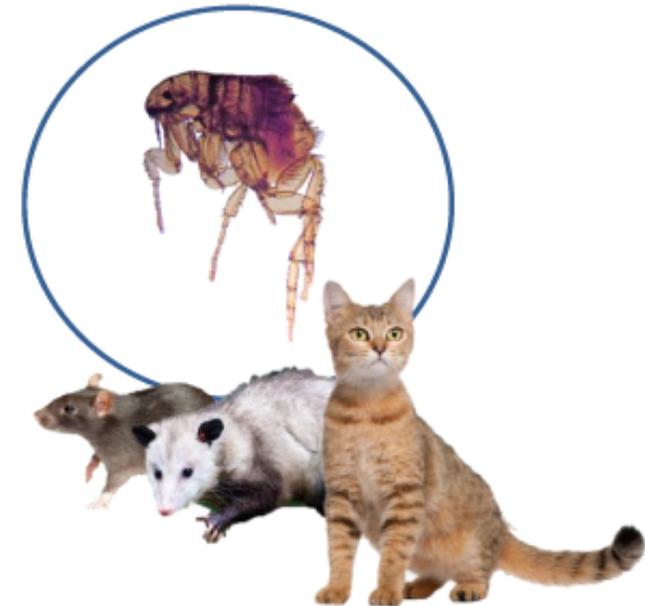
**Los Angeles County,  
Department of Public Health**  
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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
**Public Health**

# Flea-Borne Typhus

4 tips to keep your family and pets healthy.



## What is flea-borne typhus?

Flea-borne typhus is a disease that fleas can spread to humans. Bacteria (germs) found in infected fleas, and their feces (poop) cause typhus. Fleas leave feces on the skin when they bite. The infection happens when the feces are scratched into the bite site or other skin opening. It can also spread when we rub our eyes or breathe in the germs found in the flea feces. Flea-borne typhus happens in Southern California, Texas, and Hawaii.

## How is flea-borne typhus spread?

In LA County, typhus infects the fleas of the Norway rat, roof rat, domestic cat, and opossum. These animals often come into close contact with people. Infected animals don't usually show signs that they're sick. These animals are found in both urban and suburban settings. High numbers of these animals are found when human activities provide a food source. Typhus can spread to other areas when these animals and their fleas move from place to place. That is why you should not move these animals to another area.

## What are the symptoms?

Signs of typhus can start 6 to 14 days after exposure (having contact) to the infected flea. Many people have fever, headache, chills, body aches and pains. A rash can appear on the chest, back, arms, or legs. In rare cases, there may be swelling at the lining of the brain (meningitis) and heart valves (endocarditis). Signs of typhus look

like many other diseases. It is diagnosed with a specific blood test. Contact your doctor if you think you have been infected. This disease is treated only with certain antibiotics (medicine that kills bacteria).

## Learn more about the 4 tips

Learn more about the 4 tips you can follow to keep your family and pets safe from flea-borne typhus.

### Tip #1: Stop wild animals, especially opossums and stray or feral cats, from sleeping or hiding near your home.

Fleas like to live where animals nest. Fix your home to stop rodents, opossums, and stray cats from nesting in crawl spaces, attics, or under decks. Clear your yard of heavy bushes to remove places where wild or stray animals may nest or hide. Call your local animal control office before trapping any wild or stray animals at your home. **Do not release them in another location, as this can spread disease.**

### Tip #2: Stop wild animals, especially opossums and stray or feral cats, from finding food near your home.

Pick up all fallen fruit from your yard. Don't leave pet food outside. **Do not feed wildlife or stray animals.** Store your trash in cans with secure lids.

**Tip #3: Use flea control products for your pets, yard, and home.** Keep your pets, home and yard free of fleas. Many products are available for flea control. Use each product safely by following its label. Be aware that some products made for dogs are harmful to cats. Talk to your veterinarian about what flea control product is best for your pet.

### Tip #4: Protect yourself when cleaning animal resting and bedding areas.

Flea feces can collect in these areas. Always wear protective gear, like gloves, goggles, and a mask, when cleaning these areas, especially if indoors. Spray affected areas with a disinfectant. Remove materials while still damp to prevent dust. Wash your hands when you are finished.

In an urban setting, like downtown Los Angeles, typhus infects Norway rats and their fleas. In a suburban setting, typhus infects cats and opossums and their fleas. Most flea-borne typhus cases are reported from the suburban setting.

