

## Weil's Disease

Weil's Disease, also known as Leptospirosis, kills one or two people every year. It is carried by water organisms, so rowers can be at risk.

Olympian Andy Holmes, MBE, tragically died, aged 51, in October 2010 after contracting Weil's Disease. In June 2011 a Cambridge University student was diagnosed the disease.

In the early stages Weil's Disease can be mistaken for flu but can develop into jaundice, kidney and liver failure.

### What are the symptoms?

Typically symptoms develop between 7 – 14 days after infection, although it can be as short as 2 – 3 days or as long as 30 days. Symptoms can be like those of a flu-like illness with severe headache, chills, muscle aches and vomiting. Some people may not have symptoms.

### Ways to avoid contracting Weil's Disease

- Wash or shower after rowing
- Cover minor cuts and scratches with waterproof plasters before getting in your boat
- Clean open wounds, such as blisters or calf abrasions with an anti-bacterial substance
- Wear trainers or boots to avoid cutting your feet before getting in your boat

This will also protect you against the risk of contracting other waterborne infections such as hepatitis A (a viral infection) or giardiasis (an infection caused by parasites).

### What to do if you think you have symptoms?

- Early diagnosis and treatment is important
- If you develop flu-like symptoms after rowing go to your GP and say that you are a rower
- Weil's Disease is treated with antibiotics which should be administered early in the course of the disease

### How it is spread

Weil's Disease is a zoonotic condition, which means it is spread to humans by animals. You can become infected by drinking contaminated water, or if contaminated water or soil comes into contact with your eyes, mouth, nose or any unhealed cuts in the skin.