Siberia plague lab death sparks rumours

Reports that a worker at a Siberian plague research institute died in undisclosed circumstances have sparked a flurry of speculation



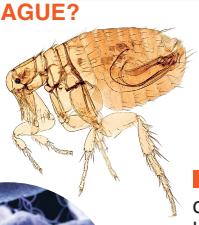
Darya Shipilova, *28:* Employee at Irkutsk anti-plague laboratory, hospitalised with pneumonia symptoms Sep 29 – dies overnight into Oct 2 at hospital in nearby town of Shelekhov

Unconfirmed Russian media reports suggest she may have been infected after breaking test tube containing pneumonic plague pathogen at lab



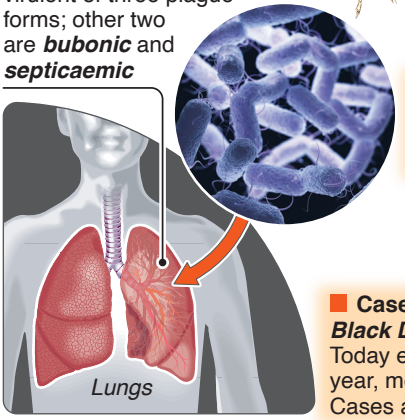
WHAT IS PNEUMONIC PLAGUE?

Serious lung infection caused by bacterium ***Yersinia pestis***, usually found in small mammals and their fleas. Most virulent of three plague forms; other two are ***bubonic*** and ***septicaemic***





Symptoms: Shortness of breath, chest pain, bloody cough



Spread: Infected flea bites or handling infected animals. Person to person via coughed droplets, usually needing close contact

Severity: Incubation can be as short as 24 hours. Nearly always fatal if untreated, but antibiotics work well if started early

Cases: Plague caused 14th-century ***Black Death***, which killed millions in Europe. Today estimated 1,000 to 3,000 cases per year, mostly bubonic, many in central Africa. Cases also in Russia, India, China and U.S.

Source: WHO, BBC, Reuters

Pictures: Newscom, Social Media, CDC

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