

CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET EHRLICHIOSIS

Ehrlichiosis is a disease caused by bacteria that are transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. There are two types of Ehrlichiosis that affect humans, each transmitted by a different type of tick.

Symptoms

- Symptoms generally include fever, headache, malaise, and muscle aches.
- Other signs and symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, joint pains, confusion, and occasionally rash.
- Ehrlichiosis can be a severe illness, especially if untreated, and as many as half of all patients require hospitalization. Severe manifestations of the disease may include prolonged fever, renal failure, disseminated intravascular coagulopathy, meningoencephalitis, adult respiratory distress syndrome, seizures, or coma.

Transmission

- People may be infected by the bite of an infected tick.

Treatment

- The disease is diagnosed by a physician based on clinical symptoms.
- Blood tests are used as confirmatory tests.
- Appropriate antibiotic treatment should be initiated immediately

Prevention

- Limiting exposure to ticks reduces the likelihood of ehrlichiosis infection.
- In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, prompt careful inspection and removal of crawling or attached ticks is an important method of preventing disease. It may take several hours of attachment before microorganisms are transmitted from the tick to the host.
- It is unreasonable to assume that a person can completely eliminate activities that may result in tick exposure. Therefore, prevention measures should be aimed at personal protection:
 - Wear light-colored clothing — this will allow you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing.
 - Tuck your pants legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pants legs.
 - Apply repellants to discourage tick attachment. Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on boots and clothing, and will last for several days. Repellents containing DEET (n, n-diethyl-m-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use DEET with caution on children because adverse reactions have been reported.
 - Conduct a body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas by searching your entire body for ticks. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find on your body.

Additional Information

How should a tick be removed? To remove an attached tick, grasp it with tweezers as close as possible to the skin and pull with firm, steady pressure straight out. Do not twist or jerk the tick, as the mouthparts may break off. If tweezers are not available, protect fingers with rubber gloves or tissue paper. Do not handle ticks with bare hands. After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

www.cdrsinfo.com

Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

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