



EHRlichiosis

What is EHRlichiosis?

Ehrlichiosis is a tick-borne disease caused by the bacteria *Ehrlichiae*. Although anyone can get Ehrlichiosis, the majority of known cases have been adults. People who spend time outdoors in tick-infested areas from April until October are at greatest risk for exposure.

How is ehrlichiosis transmitted?

Ehrlichiosis is transmitted by the bite of infected ticks (including the deer tick, dog tick and the Lone Star tick). Ehrlichiosis is not spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of ehrlichiosis?

The most common symptoms are fever, muscle aches, weakness and headache. Patients may also experience confusion, nausea, vomiting and joint pain. Unlike Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, a rash is *not* common. Symptoms usually begin one to three weeks after exposure to an infected tick. It is possible that many infected persons develop an illness so mild they do not seek medical attention.

Are there any complications from ehrlichiosis?

Ehrlichiosis can be a severe illness, especially if untreated. Severe manifestations of the disease may include prolonged fever, renal failure, blood disorders, central nervous system disorders, breathing problems, seizures, or coma.

How is ehrlichiosis treated?

Antibiotics are usually effective in treating ehrlichiosis.

How can I protect myself from getting ehrlichiosis?

Limiting exposure to ticks reduces the likelihood of infection. In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, important methods of preventing disease are prompt, careful inspection and removal of ticks. It may take several hours of attachment before microorganisms are transmitted from the tick to the person. Individuals should wear light-colored clothing and tuck pants legs into socks so ticks cannot crawl up the inside of pant legs. Apply repellants to discourage tick attachment. Mow grass frequently in yards and outside fences to reduce tick populations.

How do I remove a tick?

- Grasp the tick with tweezers or forceps as close as possible to the attachment (skin) site, and pull upward and out with firm and steady pressure. If tweezers are not available, use fingers shielded with tissue paper or rubber gloves.
- Do not handle ticks with bare hands. Be careful not to squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick, as it may contain infectious fluids.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands.
- Consult a physician if there is concern about incomplete tick removal. It is important that a tick be completely removed as soon as it is discovered.