



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER

### What is ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is the most severe tick-borne rickettsial illness in the United States. The disease occurs throughout the United States and is caused by infection with the organism *Rickettsia rickettsii*. Fewer than 50 cases are reported annually in Delaware.

### Who gets Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

Children and adults can get Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever from exposure to tick-infested habitats or exposure to infested pets. In spite of the name, few cases are reported from the United States' Rocky Mountain region.

### How do people get Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is spread by the bite of an infected tick (the American dog tick or the Lone-star tick). It is not spread person to person.

### What are the symptoms of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

Symptoms of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever include a sudden onset of moderate to high fever (lasting for two or three weeks), severe headache, fatigue, muscle pain, chills and rash. The rash begins on the legs or arms, may include the soles of the feet or palms of the hands, and can spread rapidly to the trunk or the rest of the body. Not everyone develops the rash.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear 3-14 days after the bite of an infected tick.

### How is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever diagnosed?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is diagnosed based on the patient's signs and symptoms and specialized laboratory tests.

### What is the treatment for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is treated with antibiotics, usually a tetracycline antibiotic such as doxycycline.

### How can I prevent Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?

Limit exposure to ticks. In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, prompt, careful inspection and removal of crawling or attached ticks prevent the possibility of disease. Wear light-colored clothing and tuck pant legs into socks so ticks cannot crawl up the inside of the pants. 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 a tick since it may contain infectious fluids.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly cleanse the bite site and wash your hands.
- If it is difficult or impossible to completely remove a tick, consult a health care provider.