



Ehrlichiosis Fact Sheet

What is ehrlichiosis disease?

Ehrlichiosis is a general name for diseases caused by the bacteria Ehrlichia. The bacteria are spread primarily through the bite of an infected tick. In the United States, ehrlichiosis is mainly found in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country.

How is ehrlichiosis spread?

Ehrlichiosis is acquired from the bite of an infected tick. The main tick vectors are the Lone Star Tick and Black Legged Deer Tick. Ehrlichiosis cannot be spread from person to person or by direct contact with an infected animal.

Who gets ehrlichiosis?

All persons are susceptible to ehrlichiosis, but persons who spend long amounts of time outdoors are more likely to have exposure to infected ticks. Most cases of ehrlichiosis occur between the months of May and September.

What are the symptoms of ehrlichiosis?

Early “flu-like” symptoms occur in the first 5 days. They may include fever, headache, chills, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and muscle pain. Some people will also develop a rash usually 5 days after fever begins. Symptoms can become severe if treatment is delayed.

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How soon do symptoms appear?

Signs and symptoms of ehrlichiosis typically begins within 1 to 2 weeks after bite from infected tick. It should be noted that tick bites are usually painless, and many people do not remember being bitten.

What is the treatment for ehrlichiosis?

Tetracycline or doxycycline is the antibiotic treatment of choice.

How can ehrlichiosis be prevented?

Avoiding tick exposure is the only way to protect against ehrlichiosis. If you will be working or playing in grassy or wooded areas wear light-colored clothing to allow you to see ticks easily. Wear long sleeved shirt with long pants tucked into socks or boots. DEET tick repellents can be applied to the skin (with limited use on infants and small children) and permethrin can be applied to clothing. Conduct frequent “tick checks” and remove any attached ticks as soon as possible. If a tick bite occurs, the date should be noted and your personal physician should be contacted if the person becomes ill.

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For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health
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