



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Ehrlichiosis

What is ehrlichiosis?

Ehrlichiosis is a disease caused by a type of bacteria that can infect animals and people. Ehrlichiosis has been recognized for many years, but infection of people has only been known since the 1980's.

What are the symptoms of ehrlichiosis?

Some people may not become ill or only have very mild symptoms; others may have very severe illness. Symptoms appear 1-2 weeks after being bitten by a tick carrying the bacterium. Symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, joint pains, confusion, and sometimes a rash may also be present.

How is ehrlichiosis spread?

Ehrlichiosis is spread to humans through the bite of an infected tick, and the risk of infection increases the longer the tick is attached.

Who is at risk for ehrlichiosis?

Anyone can get ehrlichiosis, but people who spend time outdoors in tick-infested areas, especially during warmer months, are at an increased risk of becoming infected.

How do I know if I have ehrlichiosis?

You cannot tell without seeing a doctor. Your doctor will complete a physical exam and lab testing. Be sure to inform your doctor if you have been bitten by a tick or have been in areas that have ticks.

How is ehrlichiosis treated?

Ehrlichiosis can be treated with antibiotics available from a doctor.

How is ehrlichiosis prevented?

Preventing the ticks from biting you will prevent ehrlichiosis. Ticks are most active in warmer months. To prevent tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass.
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into sock and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on cloths, socks, and shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After outdoor activity, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits.
- Take a hot shower and wash clothes in hot water.
- Check your hiking gear and pets for ticks as well.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/ehrlichiosis/>

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