

Babesiosis

FACTSHEET

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What is Babesiosis?

Babesiosis is a rare, serious illness affecting the body's red blood cell. The illness is caused by a parasite carried by a tick that has feed from an infected rodent or deer.

Who gets Babesiosis?

Babesiosis is seen most frequently in the elderly or in persons whose immune system is not functioning properly and persons who have had their spleen removed. It occurs more frequently in the spring, summer, and fall.

What are the symptoms of Babesiosis?

The symptoms of babesiosis may include fever, fatigue, and hemolytic anemia (iron-poor blood because of destruction of red blood cells). Infections can also occur without producing any symptoms.

How is Babesiosis spread?

Babesiosis is spread by the bite of an infected deer tick. Meadow voles, mice and deer may carry the tick. There has been occasional transmission by a blood transfusion from an infected person.

How soon do symptoms appear?

It may take from one to twelve months for symptoms to appear. People whose immune systems are not functioning properly may have symptoms sooner.

Is a person with Babesiosis contagious?

No, the disease is not spread from person-to person.

How is Babesiosis treated?

Babesiosis is usually treated with a combination of drugs and antibiotics. Consult with your physician for specific treatment options.

Should a person with Babesiosis be excluded from work or school?

It is not necessary to exclude a person with babesiosis from work or school.

Can Babesiosis be prevented?

Babesiosis can be prevented by:

- Controlling rodents around areas that house people
- Using tick repellents
- Wearing light colored clothing to better see ticks for removal
- Tucking pants into socks when walking through tick infested areas

Want more information?

Additional information can be provided by your health care provider. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842

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