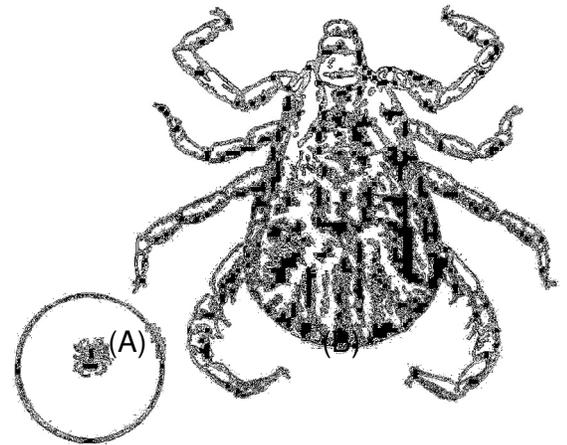


Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is a disease caused by the Rickettsia bacteria. This bacteria is most commonly carried by dog ticks (Picture 1). An infected tick can pass the bacteria to humans by biting. Ticks live in wooded areas and fields where high, thick weeds grow. When animals or people walk in these areas, the ticks fall off the weeds or bushes and become attached to people or animals. Sometimes dogs or cats carry the ticks into the home. The ticks then fall off the animal and attach themselves to humans.

Early Signs of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

The diagnosis of Rocky Mountain spotted fever is based on the time of year, the history of exposure to a tick and the person's symptoms. From 1 to 14 days after being bitten by the tick that carries the bacteria, the person begins to have a headache, fever, chills, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. On the second to seventh day of fever, a rash usually begins on the wrist and ankles (in 10 per cent of the people infected, there may be no rash). The rash looks like red-purplish spots. It will spread to the trunk and the rest of the body within hours. This rash usually spreads to the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.



Picture 1 A dog tick, actual size (A) and enlarged (B).

Treatment

- Antibiotics need to be started quickly and are given for at least 7 days. Antibiotics are not stopped until the fever is gone for 3 days.
- This can be a serious disease. Your child must take all of the medicine he or she is given.

How to Prevent Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

- Always wear insect repellent when walking in places where ticks may be found.
- Stay out of places where ticks are found, such as woods and thickets. Ticks are usually found from April through September.
- Stay out of places the Public Health Department says is infested with ticks. These areas include unkempt vacant lots.

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How to Prevent Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, continued

- If your child has played in places that may have ticks, check his body and clothes very well for ticks. Look closely at the feet, legs, waist, hairline, scalp and neck.
- Check dogs for ticks before letting them in the house. If you find ticks on your dog, ask your veterinarian or the Health Department what shampoo to use on the animal.
- Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants and closed-toe shoes when you and your child are in places where ticks may be found.

How to Remove the Ticks

1. Use tweezers or your fingers covered with a tissue or cloth. Grasp the tick close to the skin and with steady pressure pull it straight out.
2. Do not twist or jerk the tick. Take care not to crush or puncture the tick during removal.
3. Do not put anything such as mineral oil, petroleum or fingernail polish remover on the tick. Do not touch the tick with a lighted match. These methods will not make the tick back out of the skin.
4. After removing the tick, wash the area where the tick was found with soap and water.
5. Make sure you pulled out the entire tick. If you do not think you got it all out, call your doctor.
6. Wash your hands with soap and water.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if any of the following occurs:

- If your child has been bitten by a tick and develops a fever over 101°F by mouth or 102°F by rectum within 2 weeks of the bite.
- If your child complains of a headache.
- If a rash appears on your child's skin.

If you need a doctor for your child, call the Nationwide Children's Hospital referral and Information Line at (614) 722-KIDS.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.