

TICK-BORNE RELAPSING FEVER

Relapsing Fever is a disease of relapsing episodes of fever caused by a spiral-shaped bacteria.

WHO CAN GET TICK-BORNE RELAPSING FEVER (TBRF)?

Anybody of any age can develop relapsing fever. The disease occurs in the Western United States and is relatively uncommon. Most people become infected while vacationing in cabins in rural, wooded, mountainous areas.

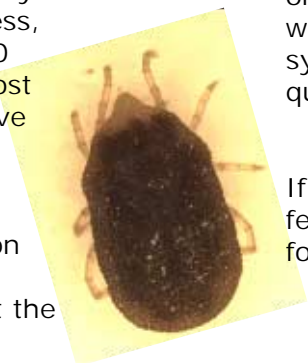


HOW DOES SOMEONE GET TBRF?

In the United States, people get relapsing fever through the bite of an infected soft tick. These ticks, *Ornithodoros*, usually feed on small animals such as squirrels, mice, chipmunks, or rabbits. The ticks live in rodent nests which can be found under flooring and between walls. If these rodents are scarce, the ticks will take a meal from other warm-blooded animals including humans.

Soft ticks, unlike hard ticks, usually feed at night. Their bite is painless, and they feed between 15 and 30 minutes before they drop off. Most people are unaware that they have been bitten.

Relapsing fever can not be transmitted from person to person except in the case of pregnant women, who sometimes transmit the infection to their fetus.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms usually develop within 7 days after being bitten. They include a sudden high fever with chills, sweats, headache and body aches. Other possible symptoms include nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, dry cough, inability to tolerate bright lights, rash, neck pain, eye pain, confusion and dizziness.

Symptomatic period, averages 3 days (range 3 to 7 days)

Relapsing episodes, can occur up to 10 times average 3



Incubation period, average of 3 days (range 2 to 18 days)

Asymptomatic periods, averages 7 days (range 4 to 14 days)



HOW IS TBRF DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?

When a person has fever it is often possible to see the spiral-shaped bacteria in a sample of the person's blood. Antibody test are also available, but these are not useful in the early stages of the disease.

Although symptoms usually resolve on their own, treating relapsing fever with antibiotics will make the symptoms subside much more quickly.

If you think you may have relapsing fever consult a medical professional for further testing and treatment.

HOW CAN I PREVENT GETTING TBRF?

To prevent infection:

- Avoid sleeping in rodent infected buildings
- Use insect repellent containing DEET
- Rodent-proof buildings in areas where the disease is known to occur
- Identify and remove any rodent nesting material from walls, ceiling and floors
- In combination with removing the rodent material, fumigate the building with preparations containing pyrethrins and permethrins. More than one treatment is often needed to rid the building of the soft-ticks.

For more information contact either the CDC at 800-311-3435 or your local or state health department