



Babesiosis

Definition:

Babesiosis is caused by a parasite in the *Babesia* family. Babesia is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms of Babesia include: fever, anemia, thrombocytopenia, chills, sweats, headache, myalgia, or arthralgia. Babesiosis can be a severe, life-threatening disease particularly in people who do not have a healthy spleen, have a weak immune system, have other serious health conditions (such as liver or kidney disease), or are elderly.

Transmission:

Babesiosis is primarily transmitted to a person through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). This tick is endemic in the state of Maine and can be found throughout the state. Babesiosis can also be transmitted by receiving transfusions from a blood donor who has a Babesia infection.

Diagnosis:

Babesiosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. A blood test is necessary for confirmation. Co-infections with other tickborne diseases may occur and should be considered.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding prevention efforts including: Wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent, using caution in tick infested areas, and performing daily tick checks.
- School nurse should encourage the use of insect repellents when outside (following local policy guidelines), and always performing a tick check when returning indoors.
 - School nurses can apply insect repellent with parental permission (see www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/schoolipm/what/whats-new.htm)
- If a tick is found, the school nurse should remove the tick using tweezers or a tick spoon. Identification of the tick may be useful.
- Tick cards and posters are available for identification at: www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml
- Whole ticks in safe containers may be given to the parents.
- Testing of the tick is not recommended for clinical purposes.

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider for treatment.
- Several effective treatments are available and are usually prescribed for at least 7-10 days.

Exclusions

- There is no need to exclude students from school for Babesiosis.
- Educational modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis.

Reporting Requirements

- Babesiosis is a reportable disease.
- Maine CDC disease reporting and consultation line: **1-800-821-5821**

Resources:

- Maine CDC Babesiosis website (including fact sheet): www.maine.gov/dhhs/babesiosis
- Federal CDC Babesiosis website: www.cdc.gov/parasites/babesiosis
- EPA Insect Repellent Finder (including time of protection):
www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you
- Tickborne Disease of the United States:
www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml
- Tick identification and testing (submission information): www.ticks.umaine.edu