

Leishmaniasis

Definition:

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease transmitted by sandflies. While typically found in the tropics, southern Europe, and South America, there are a few locally acquired cases in the United States, particularly in the southern rural states such as Texas and Oklahoma. The protozoa can only reproduce once inside a host, and can infect the skin, mucosal membranes and the reticuloendothelial system quickly. There are approximately 21 different species that can infect humans that can be identified through laboratory testing.

Signs and Symptoms:

There are three different presentations of this disease:

- Cutaneous Leishmaniasis: Causes skin sores that can change size and shape over time including bumps, lumps, and even ulcers. While the sores are usually painless, some people end up in severe pain due to a swollen gland next to the sore.
- Visceral Leishmaniasis: Affects several organs including the spleen, liver and bone marrow. During the “Black fever” stage the individual will have unusual darkening of their skin.
- Mucosal Leishmaniasis: Less common form which could be a consequence of a cutaneous infection. Certain types of the parasites could spread to the mucosal membranes in the nose, throat or mouth. Initial signs include persistent nasal symptoms such as bleeding or stuffiness, but this presentation may take years to become evident clinically.

Transmission:

Leishmaniasis is transmitted through the bite of an infected sandfly.

Diagnosis:

Laboratory testing is required for diagnosis. Tests can be done to identify the parasite, or to look for antibodies.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention:

- If students and staff are traveling to areas with high incidence of Leishmaniasis, remind them to decrease the risk of being bitten by sandflies by minimizing the amount of exposed skin and wearing repellent.

Treatment Recommendations:

- Some sores may heal on their own without treatment. Treatment decisions should be individualized and made by a healthcare provider.

Exclusions:

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

Reporting Requirements:

- Leishmaniasis is reportable as a rare or unusual condition

Resources

- Federal CDC Leishmaniasis website: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/leishmaniasis/index.html>

- World Health Organization Leishmaniasis website: <http://www.who.int/leishmaniasis/en/>