

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) is a rare neurological disease that usually attacks people over 35 years of age. One type of CJD, variant CJD (found primarily in the United Kingdom), is seen in younger people. CJD is one of a group of diseases known as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE). These disease can affect humans or, but usually do not cross between animals and people. However, there is increasing evidence that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or Mad Cow disease, causes variant CJD.

Symptoms

- Early symptoms of CJD include poor concentration, tiredness, and periods of unsteadiness when walking or standing.
- Later, people may experience agitation, confusion, forgetfulness, and muscle spasms.
- CJD progresses rapidly with vision problems, worsening of confusion, and death shortly thereafter.

Transmission

- A prion, which is a kind of infective protein, is suspected of causing the disease. No one knows for sure where this protein comes from.
- The mode of transmission of most cases is unknown. Some lab experiments have shown that CJD can be transmitted though infected body tissues such as those from the brain, spinal cord, or eye. This could happen through a transplant of parts of these organs or through improperly sterilized surgical instruments. This kind of transmission is virtually unknown now due to better infection control techniques.
- People cannot transfer the disease to each other during daily life.
- CJD disease is rare. There are only 1 to 2 cases out of every million people per year.
- Variant CJD might be transmitted by eating food contaminated with brain or spinal cord tissues from infected cows. This type is more common in the United Kingdom. So far there have been no cases of variant CJD in the United States.

Treatment

- No effective treatment is available. The disease appears to be uniformly fatal.

Prevention

- No treatment or preventative measures are available.

Additional Information

BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) or mad cow disease is a degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of cattle. BSE is found primarily in the United Kingdom and a few other European countries. In animals, the disease appears to spread by feeding animals contaminated meat or bone meal protein supplements made from other animals. The United Kingdom and U.S. have banned feeding these types of supplements. The United States has also banned imports of certain animals or meat from Europe until BSE is more fully examined.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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