

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

POWASSAN VIRUS DISEASE

Powassan virus disease is a tick-borne infection with cases reported from Canada and the Northeastern and Great Lakes regions of the United States. No cases have been reported in Ohio. Cases occur primarily in the late spring, early summer and mid-fall when ticks are most active.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin 1 week to 1 month after a tick bite.

- Early symptoms: fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and tiredness.
- Later the illness progresses to neck stiffness, confusion, seizures, difficulty talking, unsteadiness and paralysis.
- Approximately half of survivors have permanent effects, such as recurrent headaches, muscle wasting and memory problems.
- Approximately 10% of Powassan virus encephalitis cases are fatal.

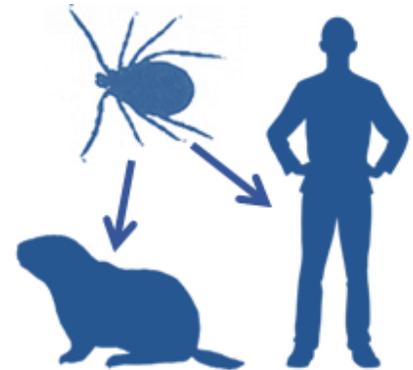


Transmission

- Powassan virus disease spreads by the bites from infected ticks. Even one tick bite is enough to pass the disease.
- Humans, woodchucks, snowshoe hares, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, skunks, cats and dogs are all hosts for this virus. The risk is highest for people who live, work or visit brushy or wooded areas because of greater exposure to potentially infected ticks.
- The disease cannot be transmitted directly from person to person. Ticks are the only carrier.

Treatment

- Blood or spinal fluid can be tested for antibodies.
- There is no specific treatment for Powassan virus disease. Care centers on treatment of symptoms and complications.
- Once infected, people are immune.



Prevention

- Protect yourself from tick bites:
 - Use insect repellents on skin and clothing.
 - Wear light-colored clothing and long pants, long sleeves, and/or socks if possible.
 - Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas.
 - Examine gear and pets for ticks after returning from tick environments.

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



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