

State of Montana

DPHHS HAN ADVISORY

Forwarding Instructions:

FORWARD to your local HAN contacts

Recent surge in Rocky Mountain spotted fever activity in Montana

Between June 13th and 17th the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Epidemiology Program, received four reports of Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) illness, three in MT residents and one in a traveler.

RMSF is an acute tick-borne illness caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii*. People who become ill with RMSF do not always recall being bitten by a tick. Symptoms associated with RMSF include fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, vomiting, nausea, and loss of appetite. A rash may appear 3 – 5 days after fever onset and is present in up to 90% of pediatric cases, and up to 60% of adult cases. Infection with *R. rickettsii* can cause severe illness and appropriate antibiotic treatment should be initiated IMMEDIATELY when RMSF is suspected on the basis of clinical and epidemiologic findings.

DPHHS Recommendations:

If you suspect a case of RMSF:

- Send an acute serum sample to a reference laboratory or to the Montana Department of Public Health Laboratory for a tick-borne disease serology panel
- Follow-up with a convalescent serum sample 2 – 4 weeks post – illness onset to confirm a four – fold rise in IgG antibody titer
- Do not delay treatment while awaiting lab test results. Doxycycline is the drug of choice for treatment in children and adults.
<http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/treatment.html>
- Collect exposure history from patient including a geographic location where a tick bite may have occurred
- Report all suspected and confirmed cases of RMSF to your local health department

More information about RMSF is available on the web at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/diseases/rocky_mountain_spotted_fever/index.html

http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD/epidemiology/documents/SS_RMSF_May2010.pdf

DPHHS Subject Matter Expert (SME) Contact:

For additional information, please contact Jennifer Lowell in the Communicable Disease Epidemiology section at 406-444-4735 or 406-444-0273.

**Distributed by the Department of Public Health and Human Services
Health Alert Network (HAN) System**

DPHHS Health Alert Hotline: 1-800-701-5769

DPHHS HAN Website: www.han.mt.gov

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification data base. If you have a different e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use please notify us as soon as possible by e-mail at hhshan@mt.gov.

The goal of Montana's Health Alert Network is to transmit information to local public health authorities as quickly as possible, and assign a suitable priority to the message. For questions or comments about Montana's HAN system you may contact the DPHHS HAN Coordinator, Gerry Wheat at gwheat@mt.gov.

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.