



HUMAN EHRLICHIOSIS AND ANAPLASMOSIS Q&A

(updated April 2008)

What are ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Ehrlichiosis (pronounced err-lick-e-o-sis) and anaplasmosis are tickborne diseases caused by bacteria. The diseases are classified separately because they are caused by different bacteria, but the two diseases have similar signs and symptoms.

How are ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis spread?

Ehrlichiosis is spread to humans by the bite of an infected tick (most commonly, the lone star tick). Anaplasmosis is transmitted by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. Person-to-person transmission has never been documented.

Who gets ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Anyone who is bitten by an infected tick is susceptible, although the majority of cases occur in adults over the age of 40.

What are the symptoms of ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Symptoms include fever, headache, chills, fatigue, and muscle pain. Some people also experience nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. Infected people may not become ill, or may experience moderate to severe illness.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear one or two weeks after the bite of an infected tick.

What is the treatment for ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Antibiotics like doxycycline are very effective in treating these infections.

What can be done to prevent the spread of ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Limiting exposure to ticks is the best way to prevent tick-borne disease. When spending time outdoors in places where contact with ticks may occur, take the following precautions:

- Wear light-colored clothing so that crawling ticks can be easily seen.
- Wear pants and long sleeves to reduce skin exposure to ticks.
- Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants to prevent ticks from crawling up pants legs.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin, and permethrin to clothing.
- After spending time outdoors, thoroughly inspect your body for crawling or attached ticks.

How should a tick be removed?

To remove an attached tick, grasp with tweezers or forceps as close as possible to the attachment site (skin), and pull upward and out with a firm and steady pressure. If tweezers are not available, use fingers shielded with tissue paper or rubber gloves. Do not handle with bare hands. Do not use petroleum jelly, fire, or other home remedies; these methods may actually increase the risk of infection. Be careful not to squeeze, crush, or puncture the tick's body, which may contain infectious fluids. After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash hands. Consult a physician if there is concern about incomplete tick removal.

Where can I get additional information about ehrlichiosis and anaplasmosis?

Additional information for healthcare providers is available on our website at <http://www.health.state.ga.us/epi/vbd/tick.asp>. Additionally, you may contact the Georgia Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Section, by email at gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us.