

Q Fever

Definition:

Q Fever is a disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Coxiella burnetii*. In the United States, Q Fever outbreaks have resulted mainly from occupational exposure involving veterinarians, meat processing plant workers, sheep and dairy workers, livestock farmers, and researchers at facilities housing sheep.

Signs and symptoms:

About half the people infected with Q fever will get sick. Signs and symptoms of Q fever may include: fever, chills or sweats, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, chest pain, stomach pain, weight loss and non-productive cough.

Q fever can cause mild or severe symptoms. People who develop severe cases may develop pneumonia or hepatitis. A very small percentage of people who become infected with Q fever develop a more serious infection called chronic Q fever which can be fatal if not treated correctly. People with chronic Q fever usually develop endocarditis.

Transmission:

Q Fever usually occurs when a person breathes in dust containing the dried wastes of infected animals. Transmission can occur with direct contact with infected animals – most commonly cows, sheep, and goats - and their blood, feces, urine, soiled materials such as straw or other bedding materials. Unpasteurized milk from infected cows or goats may also cause infection. Direct person-to-person spread is not very common but can happen.

Diagnosis:

Q Fever is diagnosed through lab tests on blood or tissues.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Educate students and staff to:
 - Use only pasteurized milk and milk products.
 - Not enter barns housing potentially infected cows, sheep, and goats.

Treatment Recommendations

- Antibiotics are used to treat Q Fever.
- Long lasting (chronic) Q Fever infection of the heart is very difficult to treat. Sometimes surgery is needed to remove damaged heart valves.

Exclusions

- None

Reporting Requirements

- Q Fever is an immediately reportable disease – report to 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC Q Fever website (including fact sheet)



<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/zoonotic/q-fever.shtml>

- Federal CDC Q Fever website <http://www.cdc.gov/qfever/>