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**Babesiosis**

**Definition:**

Babesiosis is caused by a parasite in the *Babesia* family*.* Babesia is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick.

**Signs and symptoms:**

Symptoms of Babesia include: fever, anemia, thrombocytopenia, chills, sweats, headache, myalgia, or arthralgia. Babesiosis can be a severe, life-threatening disease particularly in people who do not have a healthy spleen, have a weak immune system, have other serious health conditions (such as liver or kidney disease), or are elderly.

**Transmission:**

Babesiosis is primarily transmitted to a person through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). This tick is endemic in the state of Maine and can be found throughout the state. Babesiosis can also be transmitted by receiving transfusions from a blood donor who has a Babesia infection.

**Diagnosis:**

Babesiosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. A blood test is necessary for confirmation. Co-infections with other tickborne diseases may occur and should be considered.

**Role of the School Nurse:**

 **Prevention**

* Provide education to students and staff regarding prevention efforts including: Wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent, using caution in tick infested areas, and performing daily tick checks.
* School nurse should encourage the use of insect repellents when outside (following local policy guidelines), and always performing a tick check when returning indoors.
	+ School nurses can apply insect repellent with parental permission (see [www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/schoolipm/what/whats-new.htm](http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/schoolipm/what/whats-new.htm))
* If a tick is found, the school nurse should remove the tick using tweezers or a tick spoon. Identification of the tick may be useful.
* Tick cards and posters are available for identification at: [www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml)
* Whole ticks in safe containers may be given to the parents.
* Testing of the tick is not recommended for clinical purposes.

 **Treatment Recommendations**

* If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider for treatment.
* Several effective treatments are available and are usually prescribed for at least 7-10 days.

 **Exclusions**

* There is no need to exclude students from school for Babesiosis.
* Educational modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis.

 **Reporting Requirements**

* Babesiosis is a reportable disease.
* Maine CDC disease reporting and consultation line: **1-800-821-5821**

**Resources:**

* Maine CDC Babesiosis website (including fact sheet): [www.maine.gov/dhhs/babesiosis](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/babesiosis)
* Federal CDC Babesiosis website: [www.cdc.gov/parasites/babesiosis](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/babesiosis/)
* EPA Insect Repellent Finder (including time of protection):

[www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you](http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you)

* Tickborne Disease of the United States:

[www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/order-form-wn.shtml)

* Tick identification and testing (submission information): [www.ticks.umaine.edu](http://www.ticks.umaine.edu)