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 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: [www.maine.gov/dhhs/qfever](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/qfever)
- Federal CDC Q Fever website: [www.cdc.gov/qfever](http://www.cdc.gov/qfever)

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