



Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers

Definition:

Viral hemorrhagic fevers (VHF) are caused by a number of viruses which cause hemorrhagic symptoms. These viruses include most commonly Ebola, Lassa, and Marburg, among others.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms may include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, and unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Transmission:

Transmission may vary between the different viruses but generally occurs through direct contact with the blood, sweat, emesis, feces, urine, semen and other body secretions of a sick person or someone who has died from a viral hemorrhagic fever. It can also be spread through contact with an infected animal in affected countries, or exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions. Some of the viruses can also be spread through anal, oral, and vaginal sex. For example, the semen of men who have recovered from Ebola continuing to be infectious after symptoms have gone.

Healthcare providers caring for patients and family and friends in close contact with patients with viral hemorrhagic fevers are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with infected blood or body fluids of patients who are very sick.

Diagnosis:

Viral hemorrhagic fevers are diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests, only after symptom onset.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding good hand washing with soap and water
- Avoid contact with bodily fluids of ill students.
- When students plan to travel internationally, review guidance for destination countries.

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to a healthcare provider.
- Standard treatment is limited to supportive therapy in a hospital.
- Therapeutic vaccines may be available for some of the viral hemorrhagic fever causing pathogens (i.e. Ebola)

Exclusions

- Any students with VHF will be hospitalized and would be excluded from school. The provider and Maine CDC will provide recommendations on individual students' return.

Reporting Requirements

- VHF is a reportable disease – report immediately to 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC Ebola website: <http://www.maine.gov/ebola>
- Federal CDC VHF website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/> ****