



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC FEVER (VHF)

What is VHF?

VHF is a group of diseases caused by different types of viruses. These viruses can affect several parts of the body at one time. Although VHF can cause disease that is fairly mild, many of the viruses cause diseases which can be life-threatening.

How common is VHF?

Outbreaks of VHF occur irregularly and are not easily predicted. Although many of the viruses are found in particular parts of the world, global travel and shipping have helped transport these viruses to distant locations.

How is VHF spread?

The VHF viruses are usually carried by rodents, ticks, and mosquitoes. Animals or humans infected with VHF viruses can also transmit the disease to others.

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms of the VHF viruses vary depending on the type of virus and its severity. The incubation period for most VHF viruses is between 2 and 10 days, but typically 5 to 10 days.

General symptoms may include:

- high fever
- fatigue and/or exhaustion
- head and muscle aches
- dizziness

Symptoms in severe cases may include:

- bleeding under the skin, or into internal organs
- bleeding from the eyes, ears, nose, or mouth
- confusion
- kidney failure
- low blood pressure
- seizures
- coma
- death

How is VHF diagnosed?

VHF is usually diagnosed with blood tests and other specific laboratory tests. A detailed travel history is also important.

How is VHF treated?

Presently there is no specific treatment for most types of VHF.

How is VHF prevented?

With the exception of two VHF viruses, no vaccines are available. The best prevention is to avoid contact whenever possible with infected animals and people, as well as with rodents, ticks, and mosquitoes. The use of protective clothing and insect repellents containing DEET is also highly recommended.

For more information on VHF contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/vhf/
Phone: (888) 246-2675