



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF)

What is RMSF?

RMSF is the name given to a disease caused by the germ, *Rickettsia rickettsii* that can infect both animals and people.

How is RMSF spread?

Ticks catch the germ from small wild living rodents. The ticks then give the germ to humans when they bite.

Who is at risk for RMSF?

People who spend time outdoors in tick-infested areas, especially during warmer months, are at an increased risk of becoming infected.

How do I know if I have RMSF?

You cannot tell without seeing your doctor. Your doctor will give you an exam, ask you questions, and take blood for a lab test to see if you have RMSF.

People with RMSF first show signs 5-10 days after a tick bite. These signs may be:

- Fever
- Bad headache
- Feeling like you need to vomit
- Vomiting
- Rash
- Not hungry
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain

How is RMSF treated?

RMSF can be treated with medicine from your doctor.

How is RMSF prevented?

Preventing the ticks from biting you will prevent RMSF. Ticks are most active in warmer months. To prevent tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass.
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into sock and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on cloths, socks, and shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After outdoor activity, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits.
- Take a hot shower and wash clothes in hot water.
- Check your hiking gear and pets for ticks as well.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/>.

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