

Scrub Typhus Fever (mite-borne) Fact Sheet

What is scrub typhus fever?

Scrub typhus fever is a disease caused by bacteria called *Orientia tsutsugamushi*.

Who gets scrub typhus fever?

Scrub typhus fever occurs in people exposed to areas with scrub vegetation where rodents live, such as forest clearings, riverbanks, grassy areas, deserts, and rain forests, especially in parts of Asia and Australia. It is not seen in the U.S. except in travelers returning from areas where the disease is found.

How is scrub typhus fever spread?

Scrub typhus fever is not spread from person-to-person. Disease is spread to people by the bite of a mite (also called a “chigger”) infected with the bacteria that causes scrub typhus fever.

What are the symptoms of scrub typhus fever?

Symptoms may include a sore on the skin with a “punched out” appearance (skin ulcer that becomes dark in the center) at the site where the mite attached. Several days after the appearance of the ulcer, other symptoms may develop which include fever, headache, sweating, blood-shot eyes, swollen lymph nodes, rash, lung infection, vomiting, and diarrhea. Symptoms can worsen and complications develop.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 10 to 12 days after exposure, but may appear anywhere from 6 to 21 days after exposure.

Could scrub typhus fever be used for bioterrorism?

No. *Rickettsia prowazekii*, the bacteria that causes a different form of typhus (epidemic typhus fever), is considered an agent that could be used for bioterrorism.

How is scrub typhus fever diagnosed and treated?

The diagnosis of scrub typhus fever is based on signs and symptoms of illness, as well as laboratory tests. It is important to tell your healthcare provider about travel to any countries where scrub typhus fever may occur. Scrub typhus fever is treated with antibiotics. Healthcare providers choose the antibiotic based on the patient’s symptoms and the results of laboratory tests.

Is there a vaccine for scrub typhus fever?

There is currently no commercially available vaccine for scrub typhus fever.

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What can be done to prevent scrub typhus fever?

When visiting or working in areas where the disease occurs, take steps to avoid being bitten by a mite, such as by wearing long sleeves, not sitting directly on the grass, keeping your clothes off the grass, and using insect repellents applied to the skin and clothing containing dibutyl phthalate, benzyl benzoate, diethyl toluamide. In certain rare circumstances, antibiotics might be prescribed to prevent scrub typhus in areas where the disease is more common.

How can I get more information about scrub typhus fever?

- If you have concerns about scrub typhus fever, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>.
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/typhus/scrub/index.html>.

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