

Anaplasmosis Fact Sheet



What are anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis?

Anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis are tick-borne diseases that can be caused by two different bacteria. Ehrlichiosis is caused by *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*, which is transmitted by the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*).

Anaplasmosis, previously known as human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE), is caused by *Anaplasma phagocytophilia*, which is transmitted by the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). In New York State, most cases have been reported on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley.

Who gets anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis?

Anyone can get anaplasmosis or ehrlichiosis, although the majority of known cases have been in adults. People who spend time outdoors in tick-infested areas from April until October are at greatest risk for exposure.

How are the bacteria transmitted?

The bacteria that cause these diseases are transmitted by the bite of infected deer or lone star ticks. Neither are spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis?

The symptoms are the same and usually include fever, muscle aches, weakness and headache. Patients may also experience confusion, nausea, vomiting and joint pain. Unlike Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a rash is not common. Infection usually produces mild to moderately severe illness, with high fever and headache, but may occasionally be life-threatening or even fatal.

When do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear one to three weeks after the bite of an infected tick. However, not every exposure results in infection.

What is the treatment?

Tetracycline antibiotics are usually rapidly effective for ehrlichiosis. Because these antibiotics can cause dental staining in children, physicians should consult an infectious disease expert when treating children.

What can be done to prevent tick-borne infections like anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis?

When in tick-infested habitat - wooded and grassy areas - take special precautions to prevent tick bites, such as wearing light-colored clothing (for easy tick discovery) and tucking pants into socks and shirt into pants. Check after every two to three hours of outdoor activity for ticks on clothing or skin. Brush off any ticks on clothing before skin attachment occurs. A thorough check of body surfaces for attached ticks should be done at the end of the day. If removal of attached ticks occurs within 36 hours, the risk of tick-borne infection is minimal.



Steven M. Neuhaus
County Executive
Eli N. Avila, MD, JD, MPH, FCLM
Commissioner of Health