



PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Boston Public Health Commission
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Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis (LCMV)

What is lymphocytic choriomeningitis?

Lymphocytic choriomeningitis (or LCMV) is a germ carried by the house mouse, or other rodent, such as a hamster, guinea pig, or rat. The germ can be found in the saliva, blood, urine and droppings of an infected rodent.

How do you get LCMV?

A person can get LCMV when they are exposed to the germ found in droppings, blood, saliva, urine or nesting materials of infected rodents. A person is not known to pass on the germ to others except during solid organ transplantation or from an infected mother to her unborn baby.

Who is at risk for getting LCMV?

Persons who come into contact with urine, feces, saliva, or blood from a house mouse or other rodent are at higher risk. Owners of pet mice, hamsters, or guinea pigs could also be at higher risk if their pet has become infected from contact with a wild rodent. Laboratory workers who work with the germ are also at increased risk.

What are the symptoms of LCMV?

Most healthy people do not have any symptoms of illness. A person with symptoms may experience a fever, stiff neck, tiredness, headache, nausea, loss of appetite, sensitivity to light and muscle aches. Symptoms usually appear 6 to 13 days after exposure to the virus but could take as long as 3 weeks. In rare cases, a person may develop an infection of the brain or fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

What is the treatment?

Most people recover on their own and do not need treatment. Those who have severe symptoms have been treated with anti-inflammatory medication and supportive measures. There is no specific antiviral medication that has been shown to work against LCMV.

How to prevent LCMV?

LCMV can be prevented by avoiding contact with house mice and taking precautions when handling pet rodents (i.e. mice, hamsters, or guinea pigs.)

If you have a rodent infestation in and around your home, take the following steps to reduce the risk of LCMV infection:

- Seal up rodent entry holes or gaps with steel wool or caulk
- Trap rats and mice by using an appropriate snap trap
- Clean up rodent food sources and nesting sites and take precautions when cleaning rodent-infected areas

If you have a pet rodent, wash your hands with soap and water (or waterless alcohol-based hand rub when soap is not available and hands are not dirty) after handling rodents or their cages and bedding.

What are the recommendations for cleaning a rodent-infested area?

- Be sure the area is well ventilated (open up windows and doors if possible)
- Put on gloves
- Do not stir up dust by vacuuming, sweeping or any other means
- Thoroughly wet contaminated areas with bleach solution or household disinfectant (bleach solution: mix 1 and ½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water)
- Once everything is wet, contaminated materials could be picked up with a damp towel and then mop or sponge the area with bleach solution or household disinfectant
- Spray dead rodents with disinfectant and then double-bag it along with all cleaning materials and throw bag out in garbage
- Remove gloves and wash hands with soap and water.

**For more information, please contact
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