

# Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers



## *What are Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers?*

Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers (VHFs) are a group of illnesses caused by several distinct groups of viruses. Some VHFs cause only mild illness, but many cause severe, life-threatening disease that includes bleeding and multiple organ system failure. Examples of VHFs are Ebola, Marburg, and Yellow Fever.

All VHF viruses are associated with particular animal or insect hosts that are located in specific geographical areas of the world. The most common hosts are rodents, mosquitoes, and ticks. Taken together, VHFs occur over most of the globe.

## *What are the symptoms of VHFs?*

Symptoms of VHFs may vary but include:

- high fever
- headache
- muscle aches
- rash
- exhaustion
- bleeding from the skin
- shock
- coma

Symptoms usually appear 2 to 5 days after exposure to the virus, but can take as long as 9-35 days. A history of travel to certain areas may be an important clue to diagnosis.

## *How are VHFs treated?*

VHFs are treated with supportive hospital care. There is no specific cure, but antiviral drugs are useful in certain cases.

## *How do VHFs spread?*

People get VHFs by coming in contact with an animal or insect that is infected with the virus. This can happen by:

- being bitten by an infected mosquito or tick
- inhaling small particles containing infected rodent droppings
- handling infected animal carcasses

Person-to-person spread is possible, but not common.

## *How can I prevent VHFs?*

VHFs can be prevented by avoiding contact with infected rodents and insects and keeping them out of your home. Use insect repellent containing DEET on your skin, or treat clothing with repellent containing permethrin, to prevent insect bites. Wash your hands often, using soap and warm water, especially after handling rodent droppings or carcasses. Avoid breathing in air that may contain particles of rodent droppings, as when cleaning up nests.

A vaccine is available only for Yellow Fever. It may be considered if you are traveling to an area known to have the disease.

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## **District Health Department #10**

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