



EPIDEMIOLOGY & SURVEILLANCE

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(MCKINNEY, TEXAS)-There has been an increase in cases of Flea-borne Typhus, also known as “murine” or “endemic,” identified in McKinney, TX.

Typhus is spread to people through contact with infected fleas. Fleas become infected when they bite infected animals, such as rats, cats, or opossums. When an infected flea bites a person or animal, the bite breaks the skin, causing a wound. Fleas defecate when they feed. This feces, also called flea dirt, contains bacteria, which can be rubbed into the bite wound or other wounds, causing an infection. However, less than 5% of patients will recall a flea bite or exposure in the one to two weeks preceding illness. People can also breathe in infected flea dirt or rub it into their eyes. These bacteria do not spread from person to person.

People with typhus report non-specific symptoms, including fever, headache, chills, malaise, anorexia, myalgia, rash, nausea, and vomiting. Almost all cases are resolved completely with appropriate antibiotics. If the disease is not treated promptly, some people will need to be hospitalized.

There is no vaccine to prevent murine typhus. Reduce your risk of getting murine typhus by avoiding contact with fleas. The best way to protect yourself and your family from flea-borne typhus is to:

- Clean your yard so that rodents, opossums, and stray cats cannot live there.
- Remove any brush or trash, keep the grass mowed, and keep firewood off the ground.
- Do not leave pet food out at night as this attracts other animals.
- Prevent rodents from living in your house.
- Treat for fleas before you begin rodent control in your house or yard. Otherwise, the fleas will search for new hosts when the rodents die, possibly you and your family. There are several commercial flea control products on the market. Pick one and follow the label instructions.
- If you own pets, control the fleas on them regularly. Ask a veterinarian about flea control products that are safe to use on your pets.

For additional information and guidance about Typhus, please visit
Department of State Health Services website:
www.dshs.texas.gov/notifiable-conditions/zoonosis-control/zoonosis-control-diseases-and-conditions/flea-borne-typhus

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office at
972-548-4707 or EpiFax@co.collin.tx.us.

Thank you,

Collin County Health Care Services
Your Local Public Health Department

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