



## Babesiosis

### Definition:

Babesiosis is caused by a parasite in the *Babesia* family. Babesia is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick.

### Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms of Babesia include: fever, anemia, thrombocytopenia, chills, sweats, headache, myalgia, or arthralgia. Babesiosis can be a severe, life-threatening disease particularly in people who do not have a healthy spleen, have a weak immune system, have other serious health conditions (such as liver or kidney disease), or are elderly.

### Transmission:

Babesiosis is primarily transmitted to a person through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). This tick is endemic in the state of Maine and can be found throughout the state. Babesiosis can also be transmitted by receiving transfusions from a blood donor who has a Babesia infection.

### Diagnosis:

Babesiosis is diagnosed by clinical symptoms and laboratory tests. A blood test is necessary for confirmation. Co-infections with other tickborne diseases may occur and should be considered.

### Role of the School Nurse:

#### Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding prevention efforts including:
  - Wearing protective clothing
  - using EPA approved insect repellent
  - using caution in tick infested areas
  - performing daily tick checks
- School nurses should encourage the use of repellents when outside (following local policy guidelines), and always performing a tick check when returning indoors.
  - School nurses can apply insect repellent with parental permission (see [www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/schoolipm/what/whats-new.htm](http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/schoolipm/what/whats-new.htm))
- If a tick is found, the school nurse should remove the tick using tweezers or a tick spoon. Identification of the tick may be useful.
- Tick cards and posters are available for identification at: [www.maine.gov/dhhs/order](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/order)
- Whole ticks in safe containers may be given to the parents.
- Testing of the tick is not recommended for clinical purposes.

#### Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider for treatment.
- Several effective treatments are available and are usually prescribed for at least 7-10 days.

#### Exclusions

- There is no need to exclude students from school for Babesiosis.
- Educational modifications may be warranted in children with a positive diagnosis.

## **Reporting Requirements**

- Babesiosis is a reportable disease.
- Maine CDC disease reporting and consultation line: **1-800-821-5821**

## **Resources:**

- Maine CDC Babesiosis website (including fact sheet): [www.maine.gov/dhhs/babesiosis](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/babesiosis)
- Federal CDC Babesiosis website: [www.cdc.gov/babesiosis](http://www.cdc.gov/babesiosis)
- EPA Insect Repellent Finder (including time of protection): [www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you](http://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you)
- Tickborne Diseases of the United States: [www.maine.gov/dhhs/order](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/order)
- Tick identification and testing (submission information): [www.ticks.umaine.edu](http://www.ticks.umaine.edu)