



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

## Quick Facts

### About Babesiosis

#### What is babesiosis?

Babesiosis is a disease caused by a parasite, *Babesia microti*, which infects red blood cells. It is transmitted by ticks, infection occurs in the United States in the northeast and upper Midwest states.

#### How is babesiosis spread?

Babesiosis parasites are not transmitted from person-to-person directly. Infection occurs through:

- Being bitten by an infected tick (black legged or deer ticks);
- Receiving a blood transfusion from a donor with a 'silent' infection;
- Rarely from congenital transmission (infected mother to unborn child).

#### What are the symptoms of babesiosis?

The majority of people who have babesiosis will feel fine and show no symptoms. Some people may develop flu-like symptoms, including:

- Fever
- Chills
- Sweats
- Headache
- Body aches
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea

- Fatigue

Rarely, babesiosis may cause a type of anemia that can lead to jaundice and dark-colored urine.

Rarely, babesiosis can be a severe, life-threatening disease, particularly in people who:

- do not have a spleen or whose spleen does not function normally;
- have a weak immune system (such as people with cancer, lymphoma, or AIDS);
- have other serious health conditions (such as liver or kidney disease);
- are elderly.

### **Who is at risk for babesiosis?**

People who live, travel, or work in areas that may be infested with ticks.

### **How do I know if I have babesiosis?**

See a health care provider if you have symptoms of babesiosis and have been in tick-infested areas or have recently received a blood transfusion. Your health care provider may review your symptoms, conduct a physical exam, and order laboratory testing to see if you have babesiosis.

### **How can babesiosis be treated?**

A health care provider can prescribe medications that will treat babesiosis.

### **How is babesiosis prevented?**

Preventing the attachment and feeding of ticks through personal protection measures can prevent babesiosis.

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Minimize contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass.
- Wear light-colored long pants with cuffs tucked into socks and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on clothing, socks, and shoes and exposed skin. Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied directly to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After returning from the grassy or wooded area, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back

of neck and knees, and armpits. Take a hot shower and wash clothing at a high temperature.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/babesiosis/>

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