

Relapsing Fever (Tick-Borne)

What is tick-borne relapsing fever (TBRF)?

Relapsing Fever is a disease characterized by relapsing or recurring episodes of fever, often accompanied by headache, muscle and joint aches and nausea.

What causes TBRF?

TBRF is caused by several species of spiral-shaped bacteria that are transmitted to humans through the bite of infected soft ticks. Most cases occur in the summer months and are associated in particular with sleeping in rustic cabins in mountainous areas of the Western United States.

What are the symptoms of TBRF?

Initial symptoms of TBRF are fever, general body aches, headache, chills and sweats. Secondary/later symptoms include nausea, vomiting, anorexia, dry cough, rash, neck pain, eye pain, confusion and dizziness.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

The incubation period (time before symptoms show) is normally around seven days but can range between two and eighteen days.

What is the treatment for TBRF?

There are multiple different antibiotics your doctor can prescribe for the treatment of TBRF. The normal treatment lasts seven days.

What can be done to prevent TBRF?

- Avoid sleeping in rodent infested-buildings.
- Limit tick bites by using insect repellent containing DEET (on skin or clothing) or permethrin (applied to clothing or equipment.)
- Identify and remove any rodent nesting material from walls, ceilings and floors.
- In combination with removing the rodent material, fumigate the building with preparations containing pyrethrins and permethrins.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor.
- Your local health department listed in your telephone directory.
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191.