



# Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

## Fact Sheet

### What is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF)?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) is a tick-borne disease transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected tick. RMSF is caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii*. In Oklahoma, the American dog tick is most often associated with RMSF. An individual can also become infected with RMSF if the body fluids of an infected tick comes into contact with broken skin or the skin under the nail bed. This route of transmission can occur if the tick is “popped” or squeezed while being removed from a human or animal.

### Who is at risk of RMSF infection?

Anyone can contract RMSF. Individuals who are outdoors for extended periods of time are more likely to be bit by infected ticks, along with individuals who remove ticks from their pets.

### What are the symptoms of RMSF?

Symptoms typically begin 2-14 days after being bit by an infected tick. The first symptom is typically a sudden onset of fever or headache, but symptoms can vary person-to-person. Symptoms typically include:

- Sudden onset of headache
- Fever (often greater than 100.5 degrees)
- Muscle aches
- Nausea/Vomiting/Abdominal pain
- Development of a fine, bumpy, pink-red rash often appears on extremities, including the palms of hands and soles of feet, before spreading to other parts of the body. However, not everyone develops a rash from RMSF.

### How is RMSF diagnosed and treated?

RMSF must be diagnosed by a healthcare provider based upon clinical signs and symptoms, along with consideration of a patient’s recent activity. Healthcare providers may order laboratory testing to confirm diagnosis. Treatment often involves antibiotics but can include other medications deemed appropriate.

**If you suspect that you may have RMSF, contact your healthcare provider immediately!**

### The most effective way to prevent Rocky Mountain spotted fever is to prevent tick bites!

- Always apply EPA-registered insect repellent when spending time outdoors.
- Avoid wooded/brushy areas with tall or unmaintained grass. Always walk in the center of trails.
- Always examine your body upon returning indoors from outdoor activity and promptly remove any ticks found using a pair of fine-tip tweezers.