

Anthrax
Report immediately to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

Definition	Treatment
Signs and Symptoms	Role of the School Nurse
Transmission	Exclusion
Diagnosis	Resources

Definition:

Anthrax is caused by the bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*. Individuals become infected with anthrax when anthrax spores get inside the body and are activated. Once active, the spores produce toxins and multiply throughout the body.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms depend on the method of transmission and can occur 1 day to 2 months after transmission. When an exposure occurs and spores are transmitted, symptoms can vary. Symptoms may include but are not limited to:

- fever, chills, painless skin sores with black centers, blisters, joint and muscle aches, shortness of breath, swelling of neck or neck glands, weakness, extreme tiredness, diarrhea, vomiting, and stomach pain.

Transmission:

Transmission can occur through spores that enter

- the skin (cutaneous),
- spores that are ingested (gastrointestinal),
- by breathing in spores (inhalation), or
- through contaminated injections.

It is not known to spread from person to person.

Diagnosis:

Anthrax is diagnosed via laboratory testing performed at designated laboratories.

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, notify law enforcement and seek medical attention immediately at a hospital.
- Treatment includes antibiotics and antitoxins as determined by a medical provider.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- When students plan to travel internationally, review guidance for avoiding contact with infected animal carcasses, hides (drums made with animal skins), or eating meat from recently slaughtered sick animals.
- There is a vaccine licensed to prevent anthrax, but it is only recommended for routine use in certain groups of at-risk adults (mainly military personnel).

Exclusions

- There are no exclusions indicated.

Reporting Requirements

- Anthrax is a reportable disease – report immediately to 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC Anthrax website: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/anthrax.shtml>
- Federal CDC Anthrax website: <http://www.cdc.gov/anthrax/>