

Cat scratch disease

SP Information

Causes

Cat scratch disease is a bacterial infection caused by *Bartonella henselae*. The disease is spread through contact with an infected cat (a bite or scratch). It also can be spread through contact with cat saliva on broken skin or mucosal surfaces like those in the nose, mouth, and eyes. It has also been shown to be transmitted directly by a flea or tick bite.

Symptoms

A person who has had contact with an infected cat may show common symptoms, including: bump or blister at site of injury (usually the first sign), fatigue, fever (in some people), headache, lymph node swelling near the site of the scratch or bite, malaise. Less common symptoms may include: loss of appetite, sore throat, and weight loss.

Exams and Tests

If you have swollen lymph nodes and a scratch or bite from a cat, your health care provider may suspect cat scratch disease. A physical examination may also reveal an enlarged spleen. This disease is often not found because it is hard to diagnose. A blood test can accurately detect the infection caused by these bacteria. The results of this test must be considered along with other information from your medical history, lab tests, or biopsy. A lymph node biopsy may also be done to look for other causes of swollen glands.

Treatment

Generally, cat scratch disease is not serious. Medical treatment may not be needed. In some cases, treatment with antibiotics such as azithromycin can be helpful. In people who have a weakened immune system, cat scratch disease can be more serious. Treatment with antibiotics is recommended.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Children who have a normal immune system should recover fully without treatment. In people with a suppressed immune system, treatment with antibiotics usually leads to recovery.

Possible Complications

Encephalopathy, Neuroretinitis, Osteomyelitis, Parinaud's syndrome (granulomatous conjunctivitis with adenopathy)

Prevention

Avoid contact with possibly infected cats to prevent the disease. Preventing fleas from your pets will almost eliminate the possibility of your cat getting infected. Wash your hands thoroughly after playing with a cat not regularly treated with flea prevention, avoid scratches and bites, and avoid cat saliva to reduce your risk of infection.

Alternative Names: CSD; Cat scratch fever; Bartonellosis

Adapted from MedlinePlus