

PLAGUE

ALL SUSPECT CASES OF PLAGUE MUST BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE HUMBOLDT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH:

During business hours: 707-445-6200

After hours: Sheriff's Dispatch, (ask for the Health officer), 707-445-7251

Epidemiology:

- Highly infectious after aerosolization
- Person-to-person and animal-to-human transmission can occur with pneumonic plague via respiratory droplet

Clinical:

- Incubation period is 1-3 days (ranges up to 7 days)
- Aerosolization would most likely result in pneumonic plague
- Pneumonic plague presents with acute onset of high fevers, chills, headache, malaise and a productive cough, that is initially watery before becoming bloody

Laboratory Diagnosis:

- Bacterial cultures (blood, sputum, or lymph node aspirate specimens) should be handled in a Biosafety Level 2 facility
- Wright, Giemsa, or Wayson stain shows gram negative coccobacilli with bipolar "safety-pin" appearance
- Organism grows slowly (48 hrs for observable growth) on standard blood and MacConkey agar
- Immunofluorescent staining for capsule (F1 antigen) is diagnostic

Patient Isolation:

- Strict respiratory isolation with droplet precautions (gown, gloves, and eye protection) until the patient has received at least 48 hours of antibiotic therapy and shows clinical improvement

Treatment:

- Streptomycin (1 g IM bid) or gentamicin (5 mg/kg IM or IV qd) are the preferred antibiotics
- Tetracyclines or fluoroquinolones are alternative choices
- Co-trimoxazole is recommended for pregnant women and children between the ages of 2 months and 8 years
- Chloramphenicol should be used for plague meningitis

Prophylaxis:

- Antibiotic prophylaxis is recommended for all persons exposed to the aerosol or persons in close physical contact with a confirmed case
- Tetracyclines or fluoroquinolones are recommended for 7 days from last exposure to a case