



CASE DEFINITION

Plague

Case Definitions taken from MMWR May 02, 1997 / 46(RR10);1-55
(<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00047449.htm>)

Revised 9/96, Footnotes added 3/05

Clinical description

Plague is transmitted to humans by fleas or by direct exposure to infected tissues or respiratory droplets; the disease is characterized by fever, chills, headache, malaise, prostration, and leukocytosis that manifests in one or more of the following principal clinical forms:

- Regional lymphadenitis (bubonic plague)
- Septicemia without an evident bubo (septicemic plague)
- Plague pneumonia, resulting from hematogenous spread in bubonic or septicemic cases (secondary pneumonic plague) or inhalation of infectious droplets (primary pneumonic plague)

Pharyngitis and cervical lymphadenitis resulting from exposure to larger infectious droplets or ingestion of infected tissues (pharyngeal plague)

Laboratory Criteria for Diagnosis

*Presumptive*¹

- Elevated serum antibody titer(s) to *Yersinia pestis* fraction 1 (F1) antigen (without documented fourfold or greater change) in a patient with no history of plague vaccination or
- Detection of F1 antigen in a clinical specimen by fluorescent assay

Confirmatory

- Isolation of *Y. pestis* from a clinical specimen or
- Fourfold or greater change in serum antibody titer to *Y. pestis* F1 antigen

Case Classification

Suspected:

A clinically compatible case without presumptive or confirmatory laboratory results

¹ Note: Per the Interim Plague Response Plan, presumptive laboratory criteria can also include positive PCR evidence.

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Probable:²

A clinically compatible case with presumptive laboratory results

Confirmed:

A clinically compatible case with confirmatory laboratory results

² Note: In addition to the above definitions, and in the context of an outbreak, health officials may want to consider as "probable" cases persons with clinically compatible illness and an epidemiological link to a confirmed case.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/plague, or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

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