



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC FEVERS (VHFs)
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What are VHFs?

Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers (VHFs) are a group of illnesses that are caused by several different viruses. They can affect multiple organ systems in the body. Some types of VHFs can cause fairly mild illnesses, but many of these viruses cause severe, life-threatening diseases. The following diseases are VHFs: Marburg, Ebola, and Congo Fever.

What are the symptoms of VHF illnesses?

Specific signs and symptoms vary by the type of VHF, but initial signs and symptoms often include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Muscle aches
- Loss of strength
- Exhaustion

Severely ill patients may show:

- Shock
- Delirium
- Seizures
- Coma
- Nervous system problems (brain, spinal cord, & nervous tissue)
- Kidney failure

Patients with severe cases of VHF often have bleeding under the skin, in internal organs, or from the mouth, eyes, or ears.



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How are VHFs spread?

Viruses that cause VHFs are first spread to people when they come in contact with infected rats and mice or ticks and mosquitoes. The viruses carried by rodents are spread to people when they come in contact with urine, fecal matter, saliva, or other body fluids from infected rodents. The viruses carried by ticks spread to people when they crush a tick. In some cases, these common pests may spread a virus to animals or livestock. Therefore, people can then become infected when they care for or slaughter the farm animals.

How are VHF patients treated?

Patients receive supportive therapy, but usually there is no other treatment or cure for VHFs.