Smallpox

Merlin disease code: 05090 Smallpox

Specimens for all cases must be sent to the Bureau of Public Health Laboratories

This condition has been identified as a potential bioterrorism agent by the CDC.

Clinical criteria for case classification

**Confirmatory:**
Both of the following:

- Acute onset of fever ≥101° F (≥38.3 °C)
- **Followed by** a rash characterized by firm deep seated vesicles or pustules in the same stage of development without other apparent cause.

**Presumptive:**
Presentations of smallpox that do not meet the classical confirmatory clinical criteria: hemorrhagic type, flat type, or *Varicella sine erupturne* (detailed clinical description available here: [www.cdc.gov/smallpox/clinicians/clinical-disease.html](http://www.cdc.gov/smallpox/clinicians/clinical-disease.html)).

**Supportive:**
Generalized, acute vesicular or pustular rash illness with fever preceding development of rash by 1-4 days.

Laboratory criteria for case classification

Either of the following:

- Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) identification of variola DNA in a clinical specimen
- Or isolation of smallpox (variola) virus from a clinical specimen (Level D laboratory only; confirmed by variola PCR).

Epidemiological criteria for case classification

**Confirmatory:**
A person who is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed smallpox case with laboratory criteria.

**Presumptive:**
A person who is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed smallpox case.

Case classification

**Confirmed:**
Either of the following:

- A person with laboratory criteria
- Or a person with confirmatory clinical criteria and confirmatory epidemiological criteria.

**Probable:**
A person with confirmatory or presumptive clinical criteria and presumptive epidemiological criteria.

**Suspect:**
A person with supportive clinical criteria.
Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports

Not applicable.

Comments

A case may be excluded as a suspect or probable smallpox case if an alternative diagnosis fully explains the illness or appropriate clinical specimens are negative for laboratory criteria for smallpox.