



TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (E.G., CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE)

WHAT IS TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY?

TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (E.G., CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE) OFTEN REFERRED TO AS CJD, IS A RARE, FATAL DISEASE AFFECTING THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. THE CAUSE OF CJD IS BELIEVED TO BE AN ABNORMAL PROTEIN THAT CAN OCCUR IN CERTAIN TYPES OF NERVOUS SYSTEM TISSUE. A BACTERIA, VIRUS, OR PARASITE DOES NOT CAUSE CJD.

WHO GETS CJD?

CJD MOST FREQUENTLY IS SEEN IN OLDER PEOPLE AND SCIENTISTS DO NOT KNOW THE CAUSE IN SOME CASES. GENETICS AND DIRECT CONTACT WITH CONTAMINATED TISSUE DURING SPECIFIC TYPES OF MEDICAL PROCEDURES ARE SOMETIMES THE CAUSE.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CJD?

PEOPLE WITH CJD DEVELOP DEMENTIA AND QUICKLY DETERIORATE MENTALLY. OTHER SYMPTOMS INCLUDE TWITCHING, LACK OF COORDINATION, DECREASE IN VISION, AND THE INABILITY TO SPEAK. APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF OF THE INDIVIDUALS DIAGNOSED WITH CJD DIE WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE TIME THEIR SYMPTOMS BEGAN; BY ONE YEAR, 90 TO 95 PERCENT HAVE DIED.

IS CJD RELATED TO EATING BEEF?

MOST CASES OF CJD ARE NOT CAUSED BY OR RELATED TO EATING BEEF. VARIANT CJD (VCJD), MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS "MAD COW DISEASE," IS A SIMILAR, BUT AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT DISEASE.

HOW IS CJD TREATED?

THERE IS NO KNOWN CURE. MEDICATIONS MAY BE NEEDED TO CONTROL SYMPTOMS.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?

CJD CAUSES DEATH BY INFECTION, HEART FAILURE, OR RESPIRATORY FAILURE.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT CJD?

MOST COUNTRIES NOW HAVE STRICT GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF INFECTED COWS AND STRICT RESTRICTIONS REGARDING WHAT THEY ARE FED, TO AVOID THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSMISSION OF CJD TO HUMANS.