

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms usually are gradual:

- Fever
- Weakness
- Malaise
- Headache
- Joint and back pain
- Sore throat
- Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

In severe cases the symptoms are:

- Bleeding from the nose, mouth, vagina or gastrointestinal tract
- Facial swelling
- Low blood pressure



TRANSMISSION

Virus Distribution and Spread

Lassa fever is a viral haemorrhagic fever, transmitted to humans on contact with excretions from infected rodents.

People usually become infected by inhaling dried rodent excretions, eating food contaminated by rodent excrement, or eating infected rodents. Outbreaks occur through direct contact with body fluids of an infected person.

Lassa fever is an endemic disease in Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Togo and Nigeria, and probably exists in other West African countries. The overall case-fatality is 1%.

RECOMMENDATION

Prevention

- Strict hygiene
- Proper disposal of garbage and far from the home.
- Adequate food storage in rodent-proof containers
- Follow strict hygiene procedures, including frequent handwashing
- Avoid risky exposures: Do not participate in traditional funerals
- Avoid direct unprotected contact with sick people and their body fluids
- Select safe food and water

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for Lassa fever infection however the antiviral drug ribavirin has been used in some countries as a therapeutic measure. Vaccine for Lassa fever is not currently available.

Diagnosis and rapid treatment are necessary to avoid complications. Appropriate rehydration, oxygenation and symptomatic treatment are recommended. Severe clinical presentation may require hospitalization.