

# Smallpox



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Smallpox Smallpox is a contagious disease caused by the variola virus. It starts off as a fever, and then progresses into a skin rash. By 1980, the disease was declared eradicated because of worldwide vaccination services. As a result of the 9/11 terrorists attack, the United States is very cautious of this disease as its potential use of a terrorist weapon. The United States has made a nationwide emergency plan if there were to be an outbreak of smallpox. Smallpox can be spread airborne by an infected person by breathing, talking, laughing or coughing.

A person exposed to smallpox will have no immediate symptoms, and will not be contagious at that point. It takes between 7 and 17 days until the disease shows symptoms. The disease stops becoming contagious when the last scab falls off. About 30% of people die by smallpox (CDC 2009). For prevention and treatment, the U. S. has made the National Smallpox Preparedness Plan in 2002, which helps prevent smallpox outbreaks. There are response teams that are ready to fight the disease at any point in time.

As of right now, there is no proven treatment for smallpox. There are lab studies currently testing the drug Cidofovir that may fight against the smallpox virus. Scientists are currently testing this drug with animals to see its effectiveness. The impact of this disease would be very detrimental to our country as well as the rest of the world if an outbreak would occur. It would be a very serious issue because of the fact that we haven't secured a proven method of treatment for the disease.

In highly populated countries, this could possibly wipe out a population of people not equipped with the right medical treatment. Smallpox affects global health because very small amounts of people are immune to it. The

biggest global issue with smallpox is that there is no found cure for treatment, only vaccine. If there were to be an outbreak, smallpox could spread very quickly and vast. If the disease would spread through international travel, it would be disastrous. Many people could be affected very quickly and not have any symptoms for days.

The United States Department of Defense as well as the WHO (World Health Organization) currently has programs contributing to the care, prevention, and special services of smallpox. On January 1, 1967, the WHO launched the Intensified Smallpox Eradication Program. This program was made to be a mass vaccination. The smallpox vaccine performs at its highest at 3-5 years then decreasing after that. The smallpox vaccine is 95% effective when used correctly. A hypodermic needle is not used in the transmission of the vaccine.

A bifurcated (2 pronged needle) is used to prick the skin and administer the vaccine. This program is important because with such a high rate of success, it is a very effective way to vaccinate someone to help insure they will not contract the disease. If cost was not an issue, I believe that even though smallpox has been eradicated, the educational and historical values of the disease, needs to be implemented in the educational system. Not far away from us, the LSU Law department has the Smallpox vaccine injury Law Project.

Started in 2002, they conduct research on smallpox and many other different types of diseases and also offer important information on them available to the public. The project mainly focuses on laws of worker's compensation with diseases, but also provides assistance medically through the university as

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well as an educational program. References Richards, E. , Rathbun, K. , & Gold, J. (n. d. ). Retrieved from <http://biotech.law.lsu.edu/Articles/smallpox.pdf> Richard, E. (n. d. ). Retrieved from <http://biotech.law.lsu.edu/index.htm>