



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)

Plague (*Yersinia pestis*)

1996 Case Definition

CSTE Position Statement(s)

09-ID-52

Clinical Description

Plague is transmitted to humans by fleas or by direct exposure to infected tissues or respiratory droplets; the disease is characterized by fever, chills, headache, malaise, prostration, and leukocytosis that manifests in one or more of the following principal clinical forms:

- Regional lymphadenitis (bubonic plague)
- Septicemia without an evident bubo (septicemic plague)
- Plague pneumonia, resulting from hematogenous spread in bubonic or septicemic cases (secondary pneumonic plague) or inhalation of infectious droplets (primary pneumonic plague)
- Pharyngitis and cervical lymphadenitis resulting from exposure to larger infectious droplets or ingestion of infected tissues (pharyngeal plague)

Laboratory Criteria for Diagnosis

Presumptive

- Elevated serum antibody titer(s) to *Yersinia pestis* fraction 1 (F1) antigen (without documented fourfold or greater change) in a patient with no history of plague vaccination, OR
- Detection of F1 antigen in a clinical specimen by fluorescent assay

Confirmatory

- Isolation of *Y. pestis* from a clinical specimen, OR
- Fourfold or greater change in serum antibody titer to *Y. pestis* F1 antigen

Case Classification

Suspected

A clinically compatible case without presumptive or confirmatory laboratory results

Probable

A clinically compatible case with presumptive laboratory results

Confirmed

A clinically compatible case with confirmatory laboratory results

Comment(s)

The 1996 case definition appearing on this page was re-published in the 2009 CSTE position statement 09-ID-52. Thus, the 1996 and 2010 versions of the case definition are identical.

Related Case Definition(s)

- [1990, January Case Definition \(casedef.aspx?CondYrID=799&DatePub=1/1/1990 12:00:00 AM\)](#)

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