

**REGION I EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
STANDING MEDICAL ORDERS
BLS**

SMO: Plague -- Bubonic

Revised Date:

Overview: Plague is caused by *Yersinia pestis*, a naturally occurring pathogen with a long history of profound impact on human life. When the disease occurs from natural infections, it is usually associated with poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding and rodents affected by fleas which bite both humans and rodents. As a biological weapon, plague can potentially be distributed by aerosol of *Y. pestis* or by airborne dispersion of fleas infected with plague. It is assumed that a modern biological attack would involve such a scenario. The ensuing outbreak would be almost entirely pneumonic plague. The incubation period in adults is usually 1 to 8 days after exposure to the pathogen and usually 3 to 4 days in pediatric patients.

• Clinical Syndromes of Plague Include:

- **Bubonic Plague:** Characteristic enlargement of the lymph nodes in the femoral area, groin, armpit or cervical lymph nodes
- **Septicemic Plague:** Occurs as a primary disease or secondary to bubonic plague with spontaneous bleeding occurring in the subcutaneous tissues causing the appearance of purple patches on the skin, and tissue death
- **Pneumonic Plague:** Primarily from inhalation of aerosols
- **Plague Meningitis:** Found mainly in children
- **Pharyngeal Plague:** Asymptomatic carriers occur in contacts of plague patients
- **Cutaneous Plague:** Ulcer or pustule at inoculation site from flea bite

INFORMATION NEEDED

- History related to the presenting condition of the patient
- Other members of the family or friends ill with similar signs and symptoms
- What is the patient's living environment like?
- Is the patient coughing up blood?

OBJECTIVE FINDINGS

- Initial presenting symptoms are non-specific and may include sudden high fever, chills, headache, malaise, nausea, vomiting, mental status changes, abdominal pain, cough or chest pain
- Enlarged lymph nodes will occur several hours after onset of the initial symptoms and would be noted in the femoral region and then the inguinal, armpit and cervical areas.
- Respiratory symptoms from secondary or primary pneumonic involvement may be seen.

BLS

- Standard isolation techniques to be used by EMS personnel including a mask on the patient and on each EMS person
- Assess the patient for any other medical or trauma issues
- Assess respiratory effort and airway patency
- Provide supplemental oxygenation with a nasal cannula at 2-6 LPM or non-rebreather mask at 10-15 LPM
- Assist ventilations as needed
- Vital signs
- Suction as needed

Documentation of adherence to protocol:

- History related to the incident
- Assessment of respiratory effort
- Oxygen provided

Medical Control Contact Criteria

- Contact Medical Control if there is any suspicion of bubonic plague exposure by the patient

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