

## Suspected Bioterrorism (BT)

Bioterrorism agents are likely to cause acute outbreaks of unusual syndromes or they can present common illnesses in an unusual setting like the “wrong” season or geographic area. Health care providers are likely to be the first to identify a case related to bioterrorism. If you can check one or more boxes in both categories below (syndrome and setting), consider BT. If you have any suspicion that a situation is related to bioterrorism, call us immediately.

### Syndrome

- Acute severe pneumonia or respiratory distress
- Encephalopathy
- Acute onset of neuromuscular symptoms
- Unexplained rash with fever
- Fever with mucous membrane bleeding
- Unexplained acute icteric syndrome
- Massive diarrhea, dehydration, and collapse

### Setting

#### **Atypical host characteristics:**

- Patient <50 years old
- Immunologically intact
- No underlying illness
- No recent travel or unusual exposure

#### **Serious, unexplained, acute illness:**

- Abrupt onset
- Prostration
- Cardiovascular collapse
- Respiratory distress
- Obtundation
- Change in mental status
- Disseminated intravascular coagulation

#### **Multiple cases with same symptoms, especially if:**

- Geographically associated
- Closely clustered in time

#### **Out of season syndromes, such as:**

- Influenza-like illness during summer

### Phone Disease Control and Protection immediately!

📞 (650) 573-2346 workdays  
📞📞 (650) 363-4981 after hours, weekend, & holidays

### Public Health Lab

📞 (650) 573-2500 for specimen submission.

### Preventing panic

If you suspect bioterror, recognize the possible **psychological impact** of premature public disclosure of your findings.

Limit discussion with your staff on a **need-to-know basis** so they can prepare your organization and your day's patients. When you call us with your report, do so in private. After all, we all hope it turns out to be a false alarm.

Please do not talk to the **media** - refer them to Public Health officials.

If you maintain a **calm demeanor**, so will your associates and patients. Battling a bioterror agent is work enough without the complications of rumors and hysteria.

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**For up-to-date, detailed information on bioterrorism, go to <http://www.bt.cdc.gov>**

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