



Argentine haemorrhagic fever: information sheet for category 2 contacts

You have been given this information sheet because you have had contact with someone with Junin virus, or material contaminated with Junin virus. Junin virus causes a disease called Argentine haemorrhagic fever. You should follow the advice in this information sheet and check yourself for symptoms for 21 days after you had possible contact with Junin virus. If you develop symptoms of Argentine haemorrhagic fever within 21 days of your last exposure to Junin virus, you should stay at home and call your designated contact immediately.

About Argentine haemorrhagic fever

Argentine haemorrhagic fever is a rare but serious disease caused by Junin virus. Outbreaks and cases of Argentine haemorrhagic fever have been reported mainly from the low grassland areas known as the Pampas region of Argentina. Cases are rarely reported outside this region of Argentina.

How Junin virus spreads

Junin virus can spread by:

- direct contact with the organs, the blood, secretions or other body fluids of an infected person (for example their vomit, faeces, urine, saliva, or semen)
- contact with objects, such as needles or soiled clothing, that have been contaminated with infected bodily fluids
- contact with infected rodents

Junin virus is not spread through routine, social contact (such as shaking hands or sitting next to someone) with people who do not have symptoms.

It can take up to 21 days from when someone is exposed to the virus for symptoms to appear.

Symptoms of Argentine haemorrhagic fever

The illness can begin with symptoms including:

- feeling unwell
- chills

- fever (temperature above 37.5°C)
- headache
- loss of appetite
- generalised aches and pains in muscles

A few days later symptoms can include:

- pain behind the eyes
- nausea
- vomiting
- abdominal pain
- constipation or mild diarrhoea

Some patients with severe illness may develop internal and external bleeding.

Preventing and treating Argentine haemorrhagic fever

Junin vaccine is recommended for people who may be exposed to the Junin virus in Argentina because of occupational (agricultural or laboratory) exposure. The vaccine which is licensed in Argentina is routinely used in Argentina to protect against Argentine haemorrhagic fever.

To avoid Junin virus spreading between people, those caring for individuals with possible or suspected Argentine haemorrhagic fever should avoid contact with patients' blood and bodily fluids, and they should wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Treatment for Argentine haemorrhagic fever is with supportive care including maintaining good fluid and electrolyte balance, and managing diarrhoea, vomiting, fever and pain with medications and blood transfusions as required. Supportive therapy can also include maintaining the patient's oxygen status and blood pressure and treating any other infections they may have at the same time. Supportive care can improve survival, particularly if started early.

Your risk of developing Argentine haemorrhagic fever

You reported that:

- you had direct or close contact with someone with Argentine haemorrhagic fever, or their body fluids, outside of a designated high level isolation unit, but you were wearing appropriate PPE

Or:

- you were in an environment contaminated with the body fluids of someone who had Argentine haemorrhagic fever, but you were wearing appropriate PPE

Or:

- you have had contact with Junin virus in a laboratory which did not meet containment level 4 requirements, but followed usual laboratory practice and you were wearing appropriate PPE

We would like to monitor you for a period of 21 days from when you were last exposed to Junin virus. This will mean that we can act quickly in the unlikely event that you develop symptoms, reducing the risks to you and to others close to you.

What you need to do

Your family and household contacts are not at risk of catching Junin virus from you if you do not have any symptoms.

You should take the following actions for 21 days from when you were last exposed to Junin virus:

- record your temperature and monitor yourself for other symptoms suggestive of Argentine haemorrhagic fever (as listed above) **twice per day at the same times each day**
- report to your designated contact (see below for their details) if you develop a temperature of **37.5°C or higher**, or other symptoms suggestive of Argentine haemorrhagic fever, so that they can arrange for you to be assessed. They will explain the local arrangements for accessing healthcare
- there are no restrictions on work, travel or social activities as long as you have no symptoms
- do not share towels, bed linen, toothbrushes or razors as a precaution
- use barrier contraception or avoid unprotected sexual contact with other people as a precaution
- postpone any non-essential medical or dental treatment including vaccination. If you need essential medical or dental treatment, inform your healthcare provider about your possible contact with Junin virus

Use of medicines such as aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen

Certain medicines, such as paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin, can reduce your body temperature during a fever (antipyretic) for up to 8 hours. Thermometer measurements may therefore show a lower temperature than would be expected for up to 8 hours after taking an antipyretic.

You must call your designated contact for further advice if you need to take an antipyretic medicine.

Please take your temperature before you take paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin. If your temperature is 37.5°C or higher, you must call your contact immediately.

A temperature of 37.5°C or higher is always significant, whether you are taking one of these medicines or not, and must be reported urgently.

What to do if you become ill

It is unlikely that you have caught Junin virus. However, if you are feeling unwell or develop any of the symptoms of Argentine haemorrhagic fever (including a temperature of **37.5°C or higher**) within 21 days from when you had contact with Junin virus, please **stay at home**. Take your temperature if you have not done this already. **Phone your designated contact immediately** (see below for details), who will arrange for you to be assessed by an appropriate clinician. In an emergency, you should call 999 and tell them about your symptoms and possible contact with Junin virus.

Your designated contact number is – Delete this text and type number

Further information

You can find out more about Argentine haemorrhagic fever at:

- Argentine Haemorrhagic fever: origins, reservoirs, transmission and guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/argentine-haemorrhagic-fever-origins-reservoirs-transmission-and-guidelines>)

Document information

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