

**The University of Tennessee  
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee  
Occupational Health Program**

**HERPES B VIRUS**

**People at Risk:** The primates most commonly associated with B-virus infections are the macaques (old world monkeys of the genus *Macaca*). Since it is difficult to determine if an animal is a carrier, all macaques should be considered infected with B-virus. Other species of monkeys have also been diagnosed with B-virus but probably poses less of a risk than Macaques.

**Transmission:** B-virus can be transmitted to people through bites and scratches from infected monkeys. It can also be transmitted through accidental contaminated needle sticks, working with contaminated tissues, and working with equipment contaminated by an infected monkey. Most recently, contamination occurred by a splash of contaminated fluid into the eye of a worker.

**Symptoms:** Symptoms in an infected monkey are similar to those of a human with cold sores. They may have ulcers or vesicles (blisters) around the mouth, and may also develop ulcers on the cornea of the eye. Signs usually resolve in a few weeks.

In humans, the disease is much more severe. Clinical signs usually begin anywhere from 2 days to 1 month after exposure. They begin with signs similar to the flu, and then progress to neurologic signs including numbness, confusion, convulsions, ataxia (difficulty walking) and eventually an ascending paralysis, resulting in death.

**Prevention:** B-virus infection must be prevented since treatment can be unsuccessful. Macaque handlers should have adequate protective clothing which includes rubber gloves, long sleeved full length garments, and mask and goggles.

Macaques should be handled only while under chemical or mechanical restraint to limit direct contact with the handler. If a bite or potential contamination should occur, the wound should be cleaned thoroughly in accordance with specific guidelines established for Herpes B exposure, and an appropriate physician must be contacted.

Anyone handling human blood should be vaccinated as well.