FACT SHEET

Classic Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

What is Classic Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease?

Classic Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) is a rare and fatal disease that causes rapid and progressive damage to the brain and nervous system.

Who Can Get Classic Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease?

Classic CJD is extremely rare, affecting on average only one person per million each year worldwide. Approximately 30 Canadians will be diagnosed with CJD each year; of these, only 1-2 cases will occur in Nova Scotia. The majority of persons with classic CJD are between 50 to 70 years of age.

Classic CJD should not be confused with variant CJD which is believed to be transmitted to humans through the consumption of beef products contaminated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or 'mad cow disease').

What are the Symptoms?

Early symptoms of classic CJD include confusion, difficulty concentrating, tiredness and lack of coordination. As the disease progresses, individuals with classic CJD will develop loss of muscle control, difficulty speaking and may enter a comatose state.

What is the Treatment?

There is no known effective treatment for classic CJD. Current treatment is therefore aimed at controlling symptoms and making the person as comfortable as possible.

How Can You Prevent Classic Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease?

Classic CJD cannot be spread from person-to-person and the risk to the general population is extremely low.