

Hadera area reports three cases of Mediterranean spotted fever

Form of typhus is spread by ticks, with dogs being the carriers

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Three cases of Mediterranean spotted fever, a type of typhus, were treated at Hillel Yaffe Medical Center in Hadera in recent weeks.

Dr. Gershon Keren, head of the center's infectious diseases unit, called on the public to be alert to the symptoms and avoid being bitten by the parasite that causes the disease.

Last week, a 14-year-old girl from a settlement in the Hadera area was hospitalized with dizziness, nausea, vomiting and intermittent consciousness. Pale red spots also usually appear on the face, hands and feet. A simple blood test showed she was suffering from Mediterranean spotted fever.

Dr. Adi Klein, chief of pediatrics, said she was treated in time with antibiotics. She recovered quickly and was discharged. In the preceding weeks, two other cases were diagnosed at the hospital.

Most cases of this type of typhus occur in the northern Sharon (Hadera and environs), and in the Negev. In the summer, it becomes more common as people spend more time outdoors. It is transmitted by the dog tick *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, and the tick's bite causes a characteristic rash. The dog itself is only a carrier and does not show any illness.

The bacillus spread by the tick is called *Rickettsia conorii*, which is also associated with *Marseilles fever*, Kenya tick typhus, South African tick



DOGS CAN be carriers of Mediterranean spotted fever, but do not show symptoms of the illness.

bite fever, Indian tick typhus and Israeli tick typhus. The frequency of Mediterranean spotted fever has increased worldwide because of increased travel to endemic areas, including ecotourism.

Life-threatening complications or permanent disabilities may result from a delayed diagnosis of Mediterranean spotted fever. But it is not transmitted from one person to another. The earlier the right type of antibiotics are administered, the easier the recovery. If not treated on time, it can develop neurological complications and pneu-

monia, and in 2 percent of cases it is fatal.

Dogs in the Hadera area and Negev, as well as their living and play areas, should be treated for ticks with suitable powders. After visiting rural areas or areas where dogs are kept, look for signs of ticks. Babies and children, who are unlikely to feel ticks on their bodies, should be checked behind the ears and near their genitals. The tick should not be squeezed between the fingers, but removed with tweezers. After the tick is completely removed, wash the clothing that was being worn.