

Russian Toddler Critically Ill After Parents Turn to Church Instead of Hospital

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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The parents of a toddler who contracted tick-borne encephalitis in Russia's Altai republic tried to “treat” the boy in a church, until he developed a severe fever and was rushed to a hospital in critical condition, news reports said.

Church employees failed to persuade the parents to take their child to a hospital, and the couple kept the toddler home for another week while his condition deteriorated, the AltaiPress.ru news site reported Sunday.

The boy was rushed to a local hospital with a fever of 40 degrees Celsius and then transferred to a neurological hospital later in the day. He has been diagnosed with “tick-borne encephalitis of a meningitis form,” a spokesperson for the regional health watchdog was quoted as saying.

The disease, which is transmitted by the bite of infected ticks, common in many regions of Siberia, can cause permanent neurological damage and can occasionally be fatal.

Health officials have been urging parents to have their children vaccinated against tick-borne encephalitis, and at least one teenager whose family had ignored the warning became ill this year, according to the regional branch of health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, AltaiPress.ru reported.

However, the infected toddler, who is about 2 years old, was too young to be vaccinated, the report added.

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