

THE HEALTH ISSUE

SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES OFFICE OF HEALTH EDUCATION

Lyme Disease Awareness Refresher

The warmer months are approaching and more people will be spending time outdoors enjoying parks, beaches or their own backyards. It is therefore important to remember that during this time, disease-carrying ticks will be more active in Suffolk County. This issue of our newsletter serves as a reminder that Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases are commonly contracted during the Spring, Summer and Fall seasons, since ticks are active anytime the temperature is above 40° F. We encourage you to share this information so that students and faculty in your school will remain mindful about taking steps to reduce their risk of infection.

Lyme Disease:

Lyme Disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and transmitted by the bites of infected black-legged ticks (AKA deer ticks)

In general, the tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more for infection to occur.

Lyme disease is the leading tick-borne infection in the U.S.

Lyme disease is an on-going public health concern in Suffolk County, with the highest risk from May through November.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), about 30,000 cases are reported every year.

People who play, camp or hike where infected ticks are common, such as grassy or wooded areas, are at the greatest risk for getting Lyme disease.

Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stage of infection usually recover rapidly.



Blacklegged tick (AKA deer tick)

Early Symptoms — Contact your doctor if any of the following symptoms occur:

Red, expanding, bull's-eye rash (usually occurs 7 – 14 days after tick bite)

Fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen glands

Some people may get these symptoms in addition to the rash, but others may have these symptoms without it.

Other Symptoms Include...

- Bull's-eye rashes in other areas of the body
- Loss of muscle tone on one or both sides of the face (Bell's Palsy)
- Severe headaches
- Neck stiffness
- Pain and swelling in the large joints (such as knees)
- Rapid heartbeat and dizziness

Long Term Problems

Some patients with untreated Lyme disease may develop:

Arthritis, especially swelling and pain in the large joints.

Nerve problems, such as nerve soreness and inflammation of the brain.

And rarely, **heart problems**, such as enlarged heart, abnormal rhythm, or inflammation of the tissues surrounding the heart.

New York State Department of Health

Other Tick-borne Diseases

Babesiosis:

Babesiosis is a rare, sometimes severe, disease caused by the bite of a tick infected with a microscopic parasite that infects red blood cells.

In New York State, babesiosis is spread by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (AKA deer tick), which is the same tick that carries the Lyme disease bacteria.

Many people who are infected with babesiosis feel fine and do not have any symptoms.

Some people develop nonspecific flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, sweats, headache, body aches, loss of appetite, nausea or fatigue.

It can also lead to a special type of anemia called hemolytic anemia (a condition where red blood cells are destroyed) lasting from several days to several months.

In severe cases, blood clots, organ failure, unstable blood pressure, and rarely death may occur.

It may take from one to nine weeks, sometimes longer, after exposure for symptoms to appear. However, many people who are infected do not have any symptoms, and therefore would not require medical attention.

While many people do not become sick enough with babesiosis to require treatment, there are effective drug therapies available for those who would need them.

Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis:

Anaplasmosis and **Ehrlichiosis** are two closely related tick-borne bacterial diseases spread by the bite of infected ticks.

Anaplasmosis is spread to humans by blacklegged ticks (AKA deer tick) infected with the bacterium *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*.

Ehrlichiosis is spread to humans by lone star ticks infected with the bacterium, *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*.

The symptoms are the same for both diseases and may include fever, muscle aches, weakness, and headache.

Patients may also experience confusion, nausea, vomiting, and joint pain.

Infection usually produces mild to moderately severe illness, with high fever and headache, but may occasionally be life threatening or even fatal.

Tetracycline antibiotics are usually rapidly effective for these infections.



Blacklegged tick



Lone star tick



How to remove a tick

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- Pull upward with steady, even pressure to remove the tick. Avoid twisting or jerking.
- Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.



Notes:

Remove the tick as soon as possible to reduce your chances of getting an infection from the tick bite.

Don't use nail polish, petroleum jelly, or a hot match to make the tick detach.

If tick mouthparts remain in the skin, leave them alone. In most cases, they will fall out in a few days.

For more information call: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Web: www.cdc.gov/Lyme

Preventing tick bites

Wear long sleeves and long pants and a hat. Choose light-colored clothing.

Wear socks and closed shoes, and tuck pants into socks.

Apply tick repellent to clothing.

Stay on the path. Avoid walking through tall grass, bushes or brush.

Check for ticks after being in a wooded or bushy area.

Examine hairline, scalp, behind the ears, between the toes and other crevices and creases on the body. Ticks like to go where it's warm.

Remove ticks promptly and properly.

Tumble dry clothes in dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes to kill ticks on clothing after you come indoors.