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Press Release

Take Steps to Prevent Lyme Disease and Other Tick-Borne Diseases

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As the weather gets warmer and more people are spending time outdoors, we urge the public to take steps to prevent Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterial infection transmitted to humans by the bite of infected blacklegged (deer) ticks. It can be acquired in any Connecticut town, particularly in wooded areas of the state where deer are abundant. With no vaccine available, the key to prevention is avoidance of tick bites. In addition to Lyme disease, deer ticks in Connecticut also carry the infectious agents of anaplasmosis, babesiosis and Powassan virus.

“Lyme disease can be a tricky disease to detect because once infected, it could take days to more than a month for symptoms to develop and symptoms can vary greatly from person to person,” said Dr. Raul Pino, DPH Commissioner. “Anyone who has been bitten or who knows they have been in a tick infested area and subsequently develops a rash or flu-like symptoms – muscle aches, fatigue, or fever – should contact their physician immediately. Early treatment is critical to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the body and potentially causing long term health consequences.”

PERSONAL PROTECTION:

- Avoid tall grass and over-grown, brushy areas and
- Stay in the middle of the trails when hiking in the woods.
- Wear light-colored clothing so the ticks can be easily seen.
- Wear long pants to provide a better barrier than shorts.
- Tuck pants into socks creates a barrier and ticks will not be able to get to your skin.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and closed shoes when in tick infested areas.
- Use insect repellent.
- DEET is the primary active ingredient in most tick repellents and is considered the most effective. It must be used as directed on the container.
- Examine yourself, your children, and pets for ticks when returning indoors.
- Remove feeding ticks as soon as possible.
- When returning indoors, shower using a wash cloth or buff to remove walking ticks on your body. Ticks have a tendency to walk on the body before biting and feeding.

REMOVING A TICK:

- Tweezers are the best method to remove ticks. Grasp it close to the mouth parts near the skin surface.
- With gentle, steady pressure, pull the tick upward away from the skin until it releases.
- Contrary to popular belief, smothering ticks with petroleum jelly is not effective. Never use a hot match, gasoline or any other chemical to remove a tick.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT:

- Keep grass mowed.
- Remove leaf litter, brush, and tall weeds from around the home and at the lawn's edge.
- Use plantings that do not attract deer or exclude deer through various types of fencing.
- Move firewood, and birdhouses and feeders away from the home.
- Create a 3-foot or wider wood chip, mulch, or gravel barrier between your lawn and woods.

PET MANAGEMENT:

- Avoid access to areas with leaf litter, brush, and tall weeds. This may help reduce the number of ticks brought back into the home.
- Check pets for ticks when they come indoors.
- Check with your veterinarian regarding methods to protect your pet from tick bites.

While these steps can significantly reduce your chances of Lyme disease infection, no method is 100 percent effective. In most cases, Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. If caught early, recovery outcomes are excellent. Left untreated, Lyme disease infection can cause joint, neurologic and cardiac complications. People who experience any of these symptoms after a tick bite, should contact their primary care physician.

Early signs and symptoms (3-30 days after tick bite) of Lyme disease may include:

- An expanding red rash at the site of the tick bite. Rashes can occur anywhere on the body, and vary in size and shape. The rash can be warm to the touch, but is not usually painful or itchy.
- Flu-like symptoms that include muscle aches, fatigue, headache and fever.

Later signs and symptoms (days – months after tick bite) may include:

- Severe headaches and neck stiffness.
- Additional EM rashes on other areas of the body.
- Arthritis with severe joint pain and swelling, particularly the knees and other large joints.
- Facial palsy (loss of muscle tone or droop on one or both sides of the face).
- Intermittent pain in tendons, muscles, joints, and bones.
- Heart palpitations or an irregular heart beat.
- Episodes of dizziness or shortness of breath.
- Inflammation of the brain and spinal cord.
- Nerve pain.

- Problems with short-term memory

For additional information on Lyme disease, [visit DPH's Lyme disease webpage](#) or contact us at 203 452-2818.

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