

Tick Watch

Spring is here, so it's time to think about the outdoors and proper protection against ticks. Maine had 1,171 cases of Lyme disease reported in 2015. May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month and we want to remind you the importance of daily tick checks and encourage the "tick watch" prevention strategy.

Ticks are primarily active in warmer months. Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is caused by a bite from an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). In Maine, Lyme disease is most common in adults 65 and over and children between the ages of 5 and 15, but anyone can get the disease. Individuals who work or play outside are more likely to be exposed to ticks. The most common and visible symptom of Lyme disease is a red bulls-eye rash that grows and appears within 3-30 days of exposure. Other symptoms may include fevers, and joint or muscle pain.

Lyme disease is treatable and most individuals recover completely with a proper drugs. However, the easiest way to avoid the disease is prevention, using "No Ticks 4 ME":

- 1) Use caution in tick infested areas
- 2) Wear protective clothing
- 3) Use an EPA approved repellent
- 4) Perform daily tick checks after any outdoor activity

A tick must be attached for a minimum of 24 hours before the infection can be passed on, further stressing the need for prompt and proper tick removal. If you are bitten by a tick, or work in a known tick habitat, watch for symptoms for up to 30 days, and call a healthcare provider if symptoms develop.

Deer ticks can transmit not only Lyme disease, but also two other tick-borne infections that are present in Maine: anaplasmosis and babesiosis. Babesiosis cases increased in 2015 and cases of Anaplasmosis remained steady. The majority of tick-borne illnesses occur during the summer months when ticks and humans are active outdoors.

Remember that the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) is the only tick that can transmit Lyme disease, but there are other species of ticks throughout the state. Tick identification references are available to order online at Maine CDC's website. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab offers free identification services and educational resources.

Additional information:

- Maine CDC has Lyme disease information available on our website at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme>
- Lyme disease data is available through the Maine Tracking Network at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme> under Epidemiology Information on the left hand side of the page.
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab submission instructions can be found at <http://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>
- To continue getting Lyme updates throughout May please like our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MaineCDC>