



EHHD
Eastern Highlands Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“BLAST” Away Your Risk For Lyme Disease!

With warm weather upon us and people spending more time outdoors, The Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) is reminding residents to take precautions to prevent being bitten by ticks and being potentially exposed to Lyme disease or other tick-borne illnesses. “Tick activity this spring is expected to be very high this year. Citizens are urged to remain vigilant in efforts to prevent tick bites.” states Robert Miller, Director of Health for the EHHD.

According to the CDC, Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector borne illness (or disease transmitted to humans by ticks, mosquitoes or fleas) in the United States, with nearly 30,000 confirmed cases reported every year.

According to Dr. Goudarz Molaei, who directs the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) Tick Testing Program, “we have received over 450 ticks so far this year and nearly 38% have tested positive for Lyme disease spirochetes, 10% for Babesia microti, the causative agent of babesiosis, and 5% for Anaplasma phagocytophilum, the causative agent of human granulocytic anaplasmosis.” The higher tick abundance appears to be related to warmer winter temperatures in the State during the last two years.

Over the past five years, the Tick Testing Laboratory has received 12,483 ticks from Connecticut residents or health departments for testing and on average 27% tested positive for the Lyme disease agent.

About:

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to people by the bite of an infected black-legged tick (also known as the deer tick). The greatest risk for Lyme disease is between the months of May and August when the black-legged tick is in the juvenile stage; it’s the size of a poppy seed and very difficult to see, so individuals may be unaware they have been bitten. Ticks that transmit Lyme can also transmit other diseases, such as anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan virus. Although not as common as Lyme, these diseases can also cause illness.

Symptoms

Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, and often a skin rash that is round and looks like a bulls-eye. Lyme disease is treatable with antibiotics, but if left untreated can lead to severe headaches and neck pain caused by meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord), pain and swelling in the large joints, shooting pains that may interfere with sleep, and heart palpitations and dizziness.



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Prevention

EHHD recommends following “BLAST” steps to prevent tick bites and reduce your risk for tick borne diseases:

Bathe or shower soon after coming indoors

Look for ticks and remove with fine tipped tweezers

Apply repellents to skin and/or clothing*

Sculpt your yard to reduce tick habitats**

Treat your pets with a product recommended by your vet

** Using repellents and pesticides, while proven effective, is a personal decision*

*** Please reference the [tick management handbook](http://www.ehhd.org/tickprevention) at www.ehhd.org/tickprevention for tips on landscape management*

If not treated, Lyme disease can create serious health complications. Remember that prevention efforts and early interventions can minimize the risk. According to the latest research from the CDC, “patients treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover rapidly and completely.” Always remember to speak with your healthcare provider if you or a family member is bitten by a tick or if you notice a large round rash anywhere on you.

More Resources:

For more information about Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, including information on recognizing a rash, the printable version of the BLAST brochure, how to remove a tick, tips on landscape management, and resources on getting ticks tested for Lyme, visit the EHHD website at www.ehhd.org/tickprevention.

Detailed information about tick-associated diseases and prevention can be found at the following websites:

www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2837&q=378212&caesNav=|

www.cdc.gov/ticks

www.cdc.gov/lyme

www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3136&q=395590