



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Be Aware of Lyme Disease Throughout Tick Season

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WALLINGFORD – Doug Blodgett knew his body had completely lost its ability to regulate temperature as he alternated between chills and shaking, fever and sweating.

Blodgett, a biologist for the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife also knew the symptoms he had in June 2009 were beyond the worst cold or flu he'd ever experienced. Since he routinely worked outside, he thought he might have a tick-borne illness. When he suggested to physicians at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center that he had Lyme disease, it turned out he was right.

"I wouldn't wish Lyme disease on my worst enemy," Blodgett said. "I have never been that sick. I had a really bad headache and couldn't even move my head, and I was thinking 'What in the world could have done this?'"

As the weather warms up, Vermonters spend more and more time outside. Ticks like the warm weather too, and they have already been spotted this year. Most Lyme disease occurs in the spring, so it is important to be on the lookout for ticks as you enjoy the outdoors.

Turkey season starts soon with youth weekend on April 23rd. Sitting quietly in the brush makes people a tempting target for hungry ticks. Hunters and anyone who is outdoors should take precautions to prevent tick bites. Using appropriate repellents, daily tick checks and showering as soon as you come home should become standard practice. It is also possible to be exposed to ticks while working around the house, so take precautions when doing yard work and gardening as well.

Lyme disease has been on the increase in Vermont in recent years. A total of 1,322 cases of Lyme disease were reported to the Health Department from 1999-2009. Reported cases more than tripled from 2006 to 2008 but have leveled off the last three years, with 408 cases reported in Vermont in 2009 and 355 in 2010.

Blodgett was placed on antibiotics and his symptoms began to alleviate within 48 hours. He did not have the signature bulls-eye rash and no stiffness in his joints, which is also common after infection with Lyme disease.

"Sometimes the rash may appear in places like the scalp, where you cannot see it," Blodgett said. "The main point is, you're not always aware you have a tick on you and you should check for them."

Don't let the threat of Lyme disease keep you inside. Here are actions to take to prevent exposure to ticks:

- Avoid areas with a lot of ticks as much as possible. Ticks prefer wooded and bushy areas with high grass and a lot of leaf litter.
- Keep ticks off your skin. Wear long pants and tuck your pants into your socks to keep ticks off your skin. Light colored clothing will help you spot ticks more easily.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET on your skin. You can also use the repellent, permethrin, on your clothes. Look for EPA-registered repellents – the registration number is on the label – and follow the instructions on the label carefully.
- Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks daily, and carefully and promptly remove ticks. Ticks usually need to feed for at least 36 hours in order to transmit Lyme disease, so daily tick checks and prompt removal of ticks can prevent infection.
- Showering within two hours of being outside can also help prevent Lyme disease.
- Control ticks around your home. Remove leaf litter, tall grass, and brush. Place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas.
- Consult your veterinarian for information about tick repellents for your pets.

For more information on ticks and Lyme disease visit the Health Department at healthvermont.gov, follow us on [Twitter](#) and join us on [Facebook](#) for health information and alerts.

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