



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Enjoy Vermont Days At State Parks

Take Precautions Against Lyme Disease, West Nile Virus and Blue-Green Algae

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BURLINGTON – If you see someone tip water out of an old tire, closely check for ticks on their clothing after a hike, or scan waterways for signs of algae during **Vermont Days (June 9 & 10)**, chances are they've heard the message from the Vermont Department of Health.

The Health Department encourages Vermonters to take advantage of free entry into State Park day areas, free fishing, and free entry into historic sites and museums during the annual Vermont Days celebration (vermontdays.com).

The benefits of physical activity from getting out into the great outdoors and hiking, paddling, swimming and walking are fully supported by the Health Department's core mission to improve the health of all Vermonters.

While outdoors, Vermonters should also take note of common summer hazards. Be aware of the risk of **West Nile virus** (from the bite of an infected mosquito), **Lyme disease** (from the bite of an infected tick) and exposure to hazards such as algae blooms.

[Healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) provides information about common summer hazards, including pictures, signs and symptoms of illness, and precautions everyone can take to avoid them.

West Nile virus and Lyme Disease:

Avoid mosquito bites to prevent **West Nile virus** and **Eastern equine encephalitis virus**, and avoid tick bites to prevent **Lyme disease**.

Vermont started a comprehensive West Nile virus surveillance program in 2000, and last year confirmed the first human case in Vermont since 2003. The number of Lyme disease cases reported to the Health Department has steadily increased since 2005. In 2011, there were over 512 reports of people who were likely exposed to Lyme disease.

The increase is likely due to both heightened awareness and an increase in the number of infected ticks. The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to prevent tick bites. Perform daily tick checks and remove ticks promptly. It can take 36 hours for the tick to transmit Lyme disease so prompt removal can prevent disease.

Insect repellent is one of the precautions recommended for anyone who spends time outdoors during the summer. Most repellents contain DEET, which is safe and effective to use, even on children. Use an EPA-registered repellent and read the label carefully.

For information and resources go to healthvermont.gov and choose **Tickborne Diseases**.

Blue-Green Algae:

Public awareness about the dangers of algae also continues to grow. The Health Department, in collaboration with partner agencies and the University of Vermont, developed a comprehensive surveillance and monitoring system for algae blooms in 1999. Report blooms by calling the Health Department by calling 1-800-439-8550 (VT only).

Some kinds of blue-green algae produce dangerous toxins and exposure can result in skin irritation or allergic reactions. Drinking water that contains toxins produced by algae can result in nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Children are considered to be at higher risk because they are more likely to accidentally drink the water.

No human cases of illness related to blue-green algae have been documented in Vermont. During the summers of 1999 and 2000, two dogs died after drinking large amounts of water from a toxic blue-green algae bloom in Lake Champlain.

For full information and resources about summer precautions recommended by the Health Department go to healthvermont.gov and choose **Blue-green Algae**.

Rabies:

A final consideration while outdoors is not to feed or touch wild animals, or animals you don't know – even baby animals. **Learn more about Rabies in Vermont.**

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