



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Protect Yourself During Tick Season to Prevent Lyme Disease

*Celebrate National Public Health Week April 2 - 8, 2012*

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BURLINGTON – The incidence of Lyme disease from exposure to ticks continues to rise in Vermont. In 2011, more than 600 cases of Lyme disease were reported to the Vermont Department of Health. Several factors, including an increase in infected tick populations, and more testing by health care providers, may account for the record high number of cases in the Green Mountain State.

Between 1999 and 2007, 511 cases were reported to the Vermont Department of Health. However, during the past four years, the number of reported case has soared to 1,791.

“Health care providers statewide are aware of the importance of early recognition and early treatment of Lyme disease,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “Our role is to remind people about effective prevention strategies during tick season.”

Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics, especially if treatment is given early. Left untreated, Lyme disease may affect other parts of the body, including the heart and nervous system.

Lyme disease is transmitted from the bite of infected deer ticks, which are tiny and difficult to detect (the size of a poppy seed).

Measures everyone should take to prevent exposure to ticks and reduce the risk of contracting Lyme disease are:

- Avoid areas with a lot of ticks. Ticks prefer wooded and brushy areas with high grass and a lot of leaf litter.
- Control ticks around your home. Remove leaf litter, tall grass, and brush. Place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas. Mow the lawn and clear brush and litter frequently.
- Keep ticks off your skin. Wear long pants, long sleeves and long socks to keep ticks off your skin. Light colored clothing will help you spot ticks more easily. Tuck your pants into your socks.
- Use insect repellents. Products containing DEET are proven to be effective at repelling ticks. Choose products with up to 30 percent DEET. Higher concentrations are not usually needed. For people who work outside in tick habitats, wearing clothing treated with permethrin can prevent tick bites.
- Check yourself, your children and your pets daily for ticks. Ticks usually need to feed for at least 24 hours in order to transmit Lyme disease, so daily tick checks and prompt removal of ticks can prevent infection. Showering within 2 hours of coming indoors has also been proven to be effective in preventing Lyme disease.

The first sign of Lyme disease is often a rash that begins at the site of the tick bite. The rash usually begins 7 to 14 days after the tick was removed, but sometimes takes up to 30 days to appear, although not everyone gets a rash. Additional symptoms of Lyme disease include fatigue, headache, fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, and muscle and joint pain.

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