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**Media Contact:**

Vermont Department of Health  
802-863-7281

**Record Number of Tickborne Disease Reports Expected to Rise**

*Protect, Check, Remove, Watch for Ticks through Thanksgiving*

BURLINGTON – Ticks are back for one more meal before winter, and health officials warn this means a high risk to Vermonters in a year that already has a record rate of the tickborne disease anaplasmosis.

Anaplasmosis is spread by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick — the same tick that transmits Lyme disease, babesiosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi* and Powassan virus. According to the Vermont Department of Health, the number of cases of anaplasmosis has dramatically increased from three (3) cases in 2010 to two hundred and one (201) cases in 2016. More than one-third of Vermonters reported to have anaplasmosis were sick enough to be hospitalized.

Ticks are generally active when the weather is warm, and lay low in late summer when they molt from smaller nymphs into larger adult ticks. Tick-related hospital visits increase this time of year when the adult ticks come out to feed before winter sets in.

Bradley Tompkins, an infectious disease epidemiologist with the Health Department said that between now and Thanksgiving, people should take extra care to protect themselves from tick bites. “We’re very concerned about the [rate](#) of anaplasmosis that we are seeing all over Vermont, and especially in the southern part of the state,” said Tompkins. “Even though it’s only October, we have already exceeded last year’s case count.”

The Health Department has been working with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and Lyndon State College to study the prevalence of disease in the state’s blacklegged tick population. Between 2013 and 2016, more than 2,000 ticks were collected and tested. According to Tompkins, 60 percent of the ticks tested positive for at least one disease.

“These numbers mean it’s even more important to be on your guard,” Tompkins said. “It’s easy to think of ticks as a summer concern, but they are out in force right now. If you’ll be one of the many Vermonters enjoying the outdoors — hiking, doing yard work, or out hunting, especially deer, grouse and hare hunters who spend a lot of time pushing through thick brush — make sure you know how to avoid tick bites.”

**The best way to prevent tickborne diseases is to prevent tick bites — Be Tick Smart:**

**PROTECT**

- Avoid areas where ticks live.
- Use EPA-registered tick repellent.
- Cover up to keep ticks off your body.

**CHECK**

- Don't let ticks hitchhike inside on your clothing.
- Check your whole body for ticks.

**REMOVE**

- Remove the tick as soon as you can.
- Stick with the removal method that is proven to work.

**WATCH**

- Keep an eye out for symptoms of tickborne illness.
- Symptoms may include fever, headache, joint pain, muscle aches, fatigue or nausea. Not all people with Lyme disease report a rash. Symptoms may begin as soon as three days after a tick bite, but can appear as long as 30 days after.
- Contact your health care provider if you do get symptoms. Tell them about recent outdoor activities and any tick bites you may recall.

Go to [healthvermont.gov/BeTickSmart](https://healthvermont.gov/BeTickSmart) for more information about avoiding tick bites and tickborne diseases.

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