



EHHD
Eastern Highlands Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Eastern Highlands Health District Observes Lyme Disease Awareness Month:
“BLAST” Away Your Risk For Lyme Disease!**

In recognition of Lyme Disease Awareness Month, 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” states Robert Miller, Director of Health for the EHHD. “This winters’ snow cover provided good protection for the tick population. We are expecting a very active and very hungry tick population this spring. We urge everyone to take the appropriate precautions to prevent tick bites.”

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 in 2013. Between 1992 and 2013, the reported annual number of Lyme disease cases more than tripled, with children most at risk for the disease. Children are more at risk because they spend more time playing outdoors and in high grass or leaves, where the ticks that spread Lyme disease are found. In 2013, it was the fifth most common nationally notifiable disease (any disease required by law to be reported to the US government).

Lyme disease is transmitted to people through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. These ticks are most active during May through July, so it's especially important that people living in affected regions take steps now to prevent Lyme disease when they go outside. About 95 percent of reported cases in 2013 were from just 15 states. Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Maine, and Vermont are all on this list.

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 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.