

Health Unit Media Release

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LYME DISEASE

As we begin to experience the warmer temperatures of spring, staff of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit would like to remind those enjoying outdoor activities to be aware that they also share the great outdoors with ticks that can make them sick. Ticks can carry several diseases such as Lyme disease. Lyme disease is caused by the bite of a black-legged tick infected with a bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Lyme disease has been found in ticks along the north shore of Lake Erie, Long Point, Point Pelee as well as the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S.A. and New York State. Recent field studies indicate that this tick has a presence in some locations of the 1000 Islands region of Eastern Ontario.

Steps can be taken to minimize your exposure to ticks. Wear light coloured, long sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into your socks when walking in areas of long grass or vegetation. Insect repellents containing DEET help to repel ticks.

When you return from the outdoors check your entire body thoroughly for ticks. If you find an attached tick, remove it promptly using a pair of tweezers. Grasp the tick's head and mouth parts as close to the skin as possible and pull it straight out gently, but firmly. Avoid twisting or squeezing the tick during removal. Treat the bite area with an antiseptic. Keep the tick in a small container. Contact the health unit to arrange for identification of the tick and testing for the bacteria in the tick.

Watch for signs of infection following the bite. Initial symptoms usually occur within one to three weeks after the bite, but can range from 3 days to one month. If you experience any of the following symptoms: a red bulls-eye rash, fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, fatigue and a skin rash, contact your doctor immediately and let your doctor know when and where you were bitten by the tick. Early symptoms of Lyme disease may subside or disappear; however, without treatment, the disease can progress and affect the heart, nervous system and the joints.

For further information on Lyme Disease, please contact the Health Unit at 613-345-5685 or our Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853.

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