

## LYME DISEASE

### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that are transmitted from the bite of an infected tick. The risk for Lyme disease is greatest during the warm months of the year when the ticks are active and people are doing outdoor activities, such as camping and hiking in the risky settings where ticks live, such as grassy, bushy, or wooded areas.

### Where is Lyme disease found?

The tick that carries Lyme disease is found in many parts of the United States, especially along the east coast. In Ontario, infected ticks have been found along the north shore of Lake Erie, particularly in Long Point, Turkey Point, and Rondeau Provincial Parks, and in eastern Ontario in the 1000 Islands area. It is important to take the precautions listed below when outdoors in the woods or grasslands of eastern Ontario or the other infected areas.

### How is Lyme disease transmitted?

The blacklegged tick is the usual carrier of the disease, but not all of these ticks carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. The ticks usually feed on warm-blooded animals, such as mice and deer. Ticks may leave their host and then cling to the plants and grasses in grassy, bushy, or wooded areas, and can then be picked up on clothes or skin of humans. The tick must be attached to a person for at least 24 hours to transmit the disease. Pets do not transmit the disease, but can carry infected ticks into a home.

### What are the symptoms?

Some people get a rash or a red spot that looks like a bulls-eye, grows bigger for several days, and then fades. Fever, headache, stiff neck, aching muscles and joints, fatigue, and sore throat are other symptoms. If not treated, Lyme disease can cause severe problems to the heart and nervous system.

### How is Lyme disease diagnosed?

Anyone who has symptoms of Lyme disease should see a doctor. A blood test may be needed to confirm diagnosis of Lyme disease.

### What can I do to protect myself?

If you go into risky settings:

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, high socks, and tuck your pant legs into socks.
- Wear light-coloured clothes so that ticks can be easily seen.

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- Check for ticks every day. The ticks are often found on the thighs, arms, underarms and legs. They are very small and can look like new freckles.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET or 0.5% permethrin. The Public Health Agency of Canada advises that DEET-containing repellents are not to be used on children under 6 months of age. DEET may be considered for children aged 6 months to 2 years if there is a high risk of complications for the child. Apply once a day and use sparingly; avoid application to the face and hands. For children 2 to 12, apply DEET no more than three times a day and use the least concentrated product (10% DEET or less). For children older than 12 and adults, products containing no more than a 30% concentration of DEET will provide sufficient protection. Apply sparingly.
- If you find a tick, remove it carefully by grasping the tick's front end snugly with tweezers and pull it straight out. Do not try to smother the tick with petroleum jelly or rubbing alcohol and do not attempt to burn off the tick. Place the tick in a clean container and contact KFL&A Public Health. Put antiseptic on the bite.

If you have any questions, please call KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232 or 1-800-267-7875.

**Links:**

The Ontario and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Web site at:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/disease/pdf/lyme.pdf>

The Public Health Agency of Canada's Web site at:

[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/lyme\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/lyme_e.html)

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