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Kelli Kosonic 905-234-1018
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NEWS

Lyme disease presents many, varied symptoms

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region.

"This is the result of climate change," said Bonnette, attributing the migration of ticks to warmer average temperatures. "Now it's real."

For Limehouse resident Keith Poullos and his son, Lyme disease has been a harsh reality of their lives for decades.

Poullos was diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2004 and his son, a year later.

The small engine mechanic says he likely had the disease the majority of his life and passed it on to his son through birth.

"I was sick a lot as a child," he said. "Years of ups and downs."

Lyme disease can manifest itself in countless ways in the human body, from general fatigue, to gastrointestinal upset, heart issues and muscle pain.

"Not everyone has the same symptoms," said Poullos.

A bite from an infected tick can make a bull's-eye rash, or red ring around the bite anywhere from three to 30 days af-

ter the incident.

Poullos says that the number of people contracting Lyme disease in Halton Region is probably much higher than the public health numbers. With the wide variety of symptoms, Poullos says it's difficult for doctors to diagnose without that telltale rash.

"Doctors need to be on that awareness page and they're not at all," he said.

He says that many patients suffering with the disease leave Canada for treatment, because OHIP does not cover many of the less popular approaches to battling the disease.

"They haven't learned anything about Lyme disease in Canada," he said. "Those that are helping themselves are going to Germany or the US."

Which is exactly what Aalbers did. She sold her home in Georgetown to finance her medical expenses with a private clinic in Plattsville, New York.

"I'd be dead today if I hadn't gone out of country," she said. "I went stateside because I was malnourished, I was 98 pounds

... the doctor saved my life."

She says that as her illness progressed, she could not get a positive test for Lyme disease in Canada. She says the reason was because there are numerous strains of infection that take hold when an infected tick bites a human.

"One tick can transmit more than one infection at a time," she said. Eventually, Aalbers tested positive for a co-infection called Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

She says the illness was ravaging her body and nervous system, she couldn't work, and could barely walk.

In Canada, doctors prescribe four weeks of antibiotics to treat Lyme disease, but in New York she was able to get a longer cycle of treatment.

"It's a very big problem in Canada," she said. "My fear is that in 50 years, we're going to have a country filled with chronically ill people with no answers."

HOW TO PREVENT TICK BITES

When hiking, stay on the trails

Wear sleeves and long pants, tucked into your socks

Check yourself and others over for ticks when you get home

HOW TO REMOVE A TICK

If you find a tick feeding on you, be very careful not to break the head of the tick off when removing it.

This can be done by taking a pair of tweezers and holding it as closely to the skin as possible, pulling directly upward.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF LYME

If you are bitten by a tick and see a red "bull's-eye" rash around the bite, seek medical assistance.



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