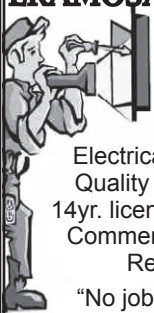


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## Lyme disease – Prevent the First Bite by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research

One of Canada's leading experts in the search for a cure for Lyme disease says that for this increasingly common disease of summer an ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure.

Dr. George Chaconas is leading a Canadian Institutes of Health Research funded study that's looking for genetic clues to new treatments for this difficult to diagnose ailment.

"I think we'll be successful, but new gene-based therapies are years away," says Dr. Chaconas, a researcher at the University of Calgary.

Lyme disease is the number one bug-borne illness in North America. It's caused by a bacterium found in ticks, and transferred to people via tick bites. Lyme disease can be acquired from early spring through late fall.

The number of cases of Lyme disease reported in the United States has increased from 491 cases in 1982 to more than 25,000 last year. The incidence of Lyme disease cases isn't recorded in Canada. However, the black-legged ticks that transmit the disease are known to occur in every province from Manitoba east to Newfoundland and in many areas of British Columbia. And with climate warming, these tick populations are slowly expanding their home ranges.

Dr. Chaconas says avoiding getting bitten, and a quick response to symptoms is still the key to dealing with this summer threat.

Defending against Lyme disease:

1. Before you travel, check for Lyme disease hot spots. For information on Lyme disease in Canada see [www.canlyme.org](http://www.canlyme.org) and [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/lyme\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/lyme_e.html). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) posts maps and weekly statistics on cases of Lyme disease. The states with the highest number of cases are Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. See the CDC website @ [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/)

2. Protect yourself. If you're in tick country, wear light coloured clothing so that the dark ticks are visible on clothing. Wear long pants with the ends tucked into your socks. Use an insect repellent with DEET. Check yourself for ticks after outdoor activity.

3. If you think you've been bitten, get medical help. A characteristic bullseye rash is often, but not always found at the site of a tick bite. If diagnosed early, Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. If left untreated, the disease can progress to debilitating stages that include severe arthritis.

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