

# PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST Lyme Disease

## FIGHT THE BITE!

### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an illness caused by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria that is spread through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (deer tick). Lyme disease does not spread from human to human.

### What are the symptoms?

A circular rash referred to as a bull's-eye rash could be one of the earliest symptoms of an infection. If you develop a bull's-eye rash, fever, chills or extreme fatigue or feel like you have the flu, see your health care provider. Be sure to tell them if you have been camping, fishing or have been active outdoors. If left untreated, it could lead to more serious symptoms affecting the central nervous system, brain or heart.

### Treating Lyme disease

Lyme disease can be treated with several antibiotics. Getting treatment in the early stages of the disease is critical for full recovery. Lyme disease can develop into chronic illness that can be difficult to treat if it is not recognized in the early stages.

### What are ticks?



Ticks are small bugs, the size of a sesame seed, which feed off the blood of animals and humans. They can be found on tall grasses and bushes and can attach themselves to people or animals. Ticks do not fly and move quite slowly. Most tick bites are painless. Ticks feed slowly and will attach themselves for 24 to 72 hours. They are most likely to spread infection after being attached for 24 hours or more. Not all ticks are infected with the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria, therefore, not all tick bites will spread Lyme disease.

### Where infected ticks are found in Ontario

In Ontario, blacklegged ticks are more commonly found in areas along the north shores of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

Locations with established blacklegged tick populations infected with the Lyme disease agent include: Long Point Provincial Park, Turkey Point Provincial Park, Rondeau Provincial Park, Point Pelee National Park, Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, Wainfleet Bog Conservation Area and in the St. Lawrence Islands National Park area.

While the risk is low, it is possible to be infected with Lyme disease from the bite of an infected blacklegged tick almost anywhere in Ontario.

### Protect yourself and your family

It is important to protect yourself each time you are in an area where infected ticks have been found. When traveling to areas with infected ticks, follow these simple tips to protect yourself:

- ▶ Wear long pants and long-sleeved tops that are light-coloured to help spot ticks
- ▶ Wear closed footwear and tuck your pants into your socks
- ▶ Use an insect repellent containing DEET and apply according to manufacturer's directions
- ▶ Search your body for ticks
- ▶ Pay special attention to the groin, scalp, underarm areas and back
- ▶ Remove attached ticks from your body as quickly as possible

### Removing a tick

- ▶ Remove it by grasping the tick with a set of tweezers as close to the skin and pull it straight out, gently but firmly
- ▶ Do not squeeze the tick as this may cause the infection to be introduced into your body
- ▶ Do not put anything on the tick or try to burn it off
- ▶ Disinfect the area with rubbing alcohol
- ▶ Place the tick in a moistened paper towel and put in a screw-top container such as a plastic pill bottle
- ▶ Store the container in a refrigerator or freezer until the tick can be submitted to your local health unit for testing
- ▶ Call York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653

For more information about Lyme disease or submitting a tick for identification, call York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY (for the hearing impaired) 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

**York Region**