

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 active outdoors. If left untreated, Lyme disease could lead to more serious symptoms affecting the central nervous system, brain or heart.

Treating Lyme disease

Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. Getting treatment in the early stages of the disease is critical for full recovery.

What are ticks?

Ticks are small bugs, the size of a sesame seed, which feed off the blood of animals and humans. They are generally active through the spring, summer and fall. They can be found on tall grasses and bushes and can attach



themselves to people or animals. Ticks do not fly and move 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 are blacklegged ticks found?

The risk of Lyme disease is usually much greater in tick endemic areas because the probability of bites from infected ticks is much greater.

In Ontario, blacklegged ticks are more commonly found in areas along the north shores of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Blacklegged ticks have also been found in York Region. York Region Public

Health will continue to conduct tick dragging at various locations across York Region's nine towns and cities.

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

Other established blacklegged tick populations and Lyme disease endemic areas include parts of British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Northeast and upper Midwest United States and central Europe.

Protect yourself and your family

It is important to protect yourself each time you are in a wooded or brushy area. Follow these simple tips to protect yourself:

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved tops that are light-coloured to help spot ticks
- 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, underarms 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 as possible to the skin and pull it straight out
- Do not squeeze the tick
- 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 or a plastic sealable baggie
- 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 visit york.ca/lymedisease

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