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Stop. Check. Prevent. Lyme Disease in Maine

With warmer weather on its way, Lyme Disease Awareness Month is here again! Health care providers reported 1,118 cases of Lyme disease in 2020 (as of March 17, 2021). While this is lower than the record number of cases reported in 2019, tickborne disease remains a serious threat in Maine.

The 2021 Lyme Disease Awareness Month theme this May is “Stop. Check. Prevent.” This reminds us to stop and practice tick prevention measures frequently. The easiest way to avoid tickborne diseases is preventing tick bites. Please remember to:

- 1) Use caution in areas where ticks may be found.
- 2) Wear light-colored clothing that covers arms and legs.
- 3) Use an EPA approved repellent such as: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- 4) Perform tick checks on yourself, family members, and pets daily and after any outdoor activity. Take a shower after exposure to a tick habitat to wash off any crawling ticks.

Infected deer ticks can spread the bacterium that causes Lyme disease when they bite. For transmission to occur, the deer tick must be attached for 24-48 hours. Use frequent tick checks to find and remove ticks as early as possible.

In Maine, adults over the age of 65 years and children between the ages of 5 and 15 years are at highest risk of Lyme disease. People that work or play outside are also at high risk of encountering infected ticks.

If a tick bites you or you spend a lot of time outdoors, make sure to watch for symptoms for up to 30 days after exposure. Also be sure to call a health care provider if symptoms develop. The most common symptom of Lyme disease is a skin rash. This is better known as the “bull’s-eye” rash. The rash usually appears 3-30 days after the tick bite and can show up at the bite site or anywhere else on the body. Other symptoms include fever, headache, and joint or muscle pain. Lyme disease is treatable, and most people recover fully.

Lyme disease is not the only disease that deer ticks in Maine can carry. Anaplasmosis, babesiosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi* disease, and Powassan virus disease are other tickborne infections found in Maine. Maine saw cases of all four diseases reported in 2020, and all remain a public health concern.

The deer tick is the only species of tick in Maine that can pass the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Still, there are several other species of ticks found across the state. Tick identification is important, especially when removing ticks. Maine CDC provides tick identification resources

available to order at the Maine CDC website. University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab also offers tick identification and testing services.

Resources:

- Lyme disease information available at www.maine.gov/lyme
- Lyme disease data available through the Maine Tracking Network at www.maine.gov/lyme under “Maine Tracking Network: Tickborne Diseases” on the left-hand side of the page
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab submission instructions found at www.ticks.umaine.edu
- For additional questions, please call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 or email disease.reporting@maine.gov
- Tickborne videos found at <http://www.maine.gov/idepi> under “Videos” on the left-hand side of the page
- Tick identification resources and other materials are available to order at www.maine.gov/dhhs/order
- To continue getting Lyme updates throughout May follow Maine CDC on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter