

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE



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TO: School Nurses, School-Based Health Centers, Epidemiologists, HETL, City and County Health Departments, Healthcare, Laboratories, County EMA, Maine Medical Association, Media, Public Health, EMS, Regional Resource Centers

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director
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SUBJECT: Update on Tick Borne Diseases in Maine

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Update on Tick Borne Diseases in Maine – December 2013

Although the weather outside may be frightful, temperature alone is not enough to kill the ticks. The deer tick can remain active in its adult stage from fall to spring as long as the temperature is above freezing. The tick will remain alive, but inactive when temperatures are below 40° Fahrenheit.

Maine CDC continues to see increased numbers of tick borne disease reports in 2013, including multiple cases with onset of symptoms as late as December. Maine CDC is investigating a probable case of Powassan encephalitis, which if confirmed will be the first documented case in the state since 2004. Providers should continue to consider tick borne illnesses, even during the winter months.

- **Anaplasmosis:** As of December 16, 2013 Maine CDC has 91 confirmed and probable cases of Anaplasmosis compared to 52 cases in 2012. Cases were reported in 11 counties with Knox county reporting the highest number of cases (25), followed by Cumberland (22) and York (17) counties.
- **Babesiosis:** As of December 16, 2013, Maine CDC has 36 confirmed and probable cases of Babesiosis compared to 10 cases in 2012. Cases were reported in 6 counties (Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot and York) with York county reporting the highest number of cases (17) followed by Cumberland (9) and Knox (7) counties.
- **Lyme:** As of December 16, 2013, Maine has 1,285 confirmed and probable cases of Lyme disease compared to 1,111 in 2012. On Thursday December 12, 2013 CDC released an MMWR report entitled “Three Sudden Cardiac Deaths Associated with Lyme Carditis.” Although Lyme carditis is rare (less than 1% of cases nationwide and in Maine), providers should ask patients with suspected Lyme disease about cardiac symptoms, and they should ask patients with unexplained heart block about possible tick exposures. The most common cardiac manifestation is atrioventricular block, symptoms of which include lightheadedness, palpitations, shortness of breath, chest pain and syncope. Maine CDC requests the report of all suspected cases of fatal Lyme carditis to 1-800-821-5821 for further investigation.
- **Powassan:** Maine CDC was notified of a hospitalized patient with suspect Powassan encephalitis in early December. Acute and convalescent serum screened positive for Powassan at CDC Fort Collins on December 13, 2013. Confirmatory testing is pending. This patient is an adult female from the Mid-Coast area with no travel history. Powassan virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected deer tick. Signs and symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, seizures, and memory loss. Long-term neurologic problems may occur. There is no specific treatment, but people with severe Powassan illness often require hospitalization.

Prevention is key in reducing the burden of all of these tick borne diseases. All Mainers should wear protective clothing, use an EPA approved repellent, and use caution in tick infested areas. Daily tick checks and prompt removal of all ticks is essential. Although a tick must be attached for at least 24 hours to transmit Lyme disease, the attachment time is not well defined for the other diseases and may be less.

For more information:

- Maine CDC Vectorborne diseases website including disease specific symptoms and testing: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vector-borne/index.shtml>

- Maine's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory Arboviral submission form:
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/health-and-environmental-testing/micro/documents/wnv-sle-eee.pdf>
- Tick Borne Disease in Maine: A Physicians Reference Manual
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vector-borne/documents/tick-reference-guide.pdf>
- MMWR "Three Sudden Cardiac Deaths Associated with Lyme Carditis" :
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6249a1.htm?s_cid=mm6249a1_x