

INSPECT AND PROTECT

Lyme disease remains the most common tick-borne disease in Maine with more than 1,395 cases reported in 2014. While ticks may be active any time the temperature is above freezing, they are most active in warmer months. May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month in Maine, and we ask you to please help us stress the importance of tick education. Specifically, we ask you to encourage patients to “inspect and protect” oneself when spending time outside. This includes daily tick checks.

Important things to Remember

- Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is transmitted through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). The tick must be attached to an individual for a minimum of 24 hours for transmission.
- The most common early symptom of Lyme disease is an *erythema migrans* (EM), a “bull’s eye” rash that appears 3-30 days after transmission (seen in about 60 to 80 percent of cases nationwide). Other early symptoms include: fatigue, fever, headaches, arthralgia, and myalgia.
- Lyme disease is also capable of causing dermatologic, rheumatologic, neurologic, and cardiac abnormalities.
- Later onset symptoms include: arthritis including joint swelling, Bell’s palsy and other cranial neuritis, encephalitis, lymphocytic meningitis, radiculoneuropathy, and second- or third-degree atrioventricular block.
- Lyme disease is treatable, antibiotic therapy is effective for the treatment of Lyme disease. Clinical treatment guidelines are available at the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)’s website.
- Lyme disease is preventable by avoiding contact with infected ticks and tick infested areas.

Ixodes scapularis can transmit Lyme disease and two other tick-borne infections that are endemic in Maine: anaplasmosis and babesiosis. Cases of both these diseases are on the rise in Maine. Anaplasmosis doubled for the second year in a row and cases of babesiosis also increased from 2013. The majority of tick-borne illnesses occur during the summer months when ticks and humans are active outdoors. If you see a patient with “summer flu,” especially if their WBC is low - think anaplasmosis and send samples for PCR testing.

Thank you for your invaluable help in preventing tick-borne diseases here in Maine.

Resources:

- IDSA treatment guidelines available at <http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/43/9/1089.full>
- Lyme disease case report form available on the web at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme> under Resources for Physicians
- “Tick-Borne Disease in Maine: A Physicians Reference Manual” is available online at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme> under Tick Resources. Paper copies can be requested through disease.reporting@maine.gov
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab submission instructions found at <http://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>
- To continue getting updates throughout May please like our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MaineCDC>