

Lyme Disease Prevention

OSWEGO - New York State continues to have one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country. In Oswego County, cases of Lyme disease have been on the increase for the past few years, although the numbers remain low. Reported human cases in Oswego County were 5 in 2009, 13 in 2010, 19 in 2011, and 42 in 2012.

Lyme disease can cause serious health problems if not caught early and treated properly. As the temperature is getting warmer and people are involved in more outdoor activities, the Oswego County Health Department would like to remind residents of steps they can take to prevent Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by the bite of an infected deer tick. Ticks transmit disease in two of their life stages: nymph (the immature) and adult. Nymphal deer ticks are active from May through July, and it is the bite of these small ticks (as opposed to adult deer ticks, which are active in fall) that lead to most Lyme infections. Common habitats for the deer tick are leaf litter in wooded areas, grassy areas along wooded edges, and low bushes and shrubs. Deer ticks are not commonly found on athletic fields and cut lawns.

It generally takes 36 hours for a deer tick to infect its host with the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, so it is important to check for ticks daily.

Early signs of Lyme disease may include rash and flu-like symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue. As the disease progresses, multiple systems can be involved. Patients can suffer chronic pain, neurological impairment, and other serious symptoms.

“Children may be at particular risk because of the amount of time they spend playing outdoors,” said Jiancheng Huang, Oswego County Public Health Director. “Spring and summer are the seasons when most people who get Lyme disease are exposed to it. The best strategy regarding Lyme disease prevention is to avoid exposure to ticks.”

To help reduce the risk of tick exposure, remind your family of these safety tips:



Before Going out:

Wear light-colored, tightly woven clothing to make it easier to spot ticks; tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks; wear closed shoes / sneakers rather than open sandals; and use a tick repellent as directed. Products should contain DEET (for clothing OR skin) or Permethrin (for clothing ONLY). Remind children to ask an adult to apply the tick repellent and DO NOT apply to hands or face. Use products with less than 10 percent DEET. Pay particular attention to tops of shoes and lower portion of pant legs, as ticks are most likely to attach here. Follow manufacturer's directions carefully. Do not use on children under 3 years

of age.



While Outside:

Stay in the center of trails; avoid low bushes and leafy brush; periodically check clothing and skin for ticks, and remove.



Upon Return:

Check clothing, skin, and hair for ticks (take special note of your child's navel, underarm, groin area and behind the ears). If a tick is found, remove it carefully with tweezers. If it was attached, note the spot of attachment, mark calendar, and save tick in a jar for later identification. Should early signs, such as an expanding "bull's eye" rash, flu-like symptoms or painful joints develop, contact your physician.

To remove a tick, grasp it as close to the skin as possible, using tweezers. Pull gently with a steady, backward pressure, and be patient. Wash the area with soap, water and a topical antiseptic.

Ticks should never be burned, smothered or crushed. These actions can increase a person's risk of Lyme disease.

For more information about Lyme disease visit

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/lyme/fact_sheet.htm or call the Oswego County Health Department at 349-3564.