



Jackson County Health Department

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Creating Healthy Communities



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Public Health Advisory/Press Release Lyme Disease Prevention

News Release From: **Jackson County Health Department**

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JACKSON COUNTY, Mich. –The Jackson County Health Department is encouraging all residents of Jackson County to take precautions when spending time outside to help prevent Lyme disease. This includes dogs and cats, as they are also vulnerable to Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. The blacklegged tick is known to dwell within Michigan forested areas. Lyme disease has been reported in 43 states including Michigan and the coastal counties of Lake Michigan and the western Upper Peninsula have been seeing the highest number of Lyme disease cases over the last several years. This area of higher incidence continues to steadily spread eastward and Jackson County is now adjacent to multiple counties with confirmed Lyme Disease. See the following map link for more detail concerning geographic risk: https://www.michigan.gov/images/emergingdiseases/2015_Lyme_Risk_Map_485658_7.jpg

It is very important to seek medical evaluation and treatment if one suspects they have been exposed to tick bites and are experiencing symptoms of Lyme disease. Diagnosis of Lyme disease

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is made through a combination of symptoms and your potential exposure to a tick bite. If symptoms are left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics.

The following symptoms of Lyme Disease are provided by the Centers for Disease Control:

Early Signs and Symptoms (3 to 30 days after tick bite)

- Fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes
- Erythema migrans (EM) rash:
 - Occurs in approximately 70 to 80 percent of infected persons
 - Begins at the site of a tick bite after a delay of 3 to 30 days (average is about 7 days)
 - Expands gradually over a period of days reaching up to 12 inches or more (30 cm) across
 - May feel warm to the touch but is rarely itchy or painful
 - Sometimes clears as it enlarges, resulting in a target or “bull's-eye” appearance
 - May appear on any area of the body

Later Signs and Symptoms (days to months after tick bite)

- Severe headaches and neck stiffness
- Additional EM rashes on other areas of the body
- Arthritis with severe joint pain and swelling, particularly the knees and other large joints.
- Facial or Bell's palsy (loss of muscle tone or droop on one or both sides of the face)
- Intermittent pain in tendons, muscles, joints, and bones
- Heart palpitations or an irregular heart beat (Lyme carditis)
- Episodes of dizziness or shortness of breath
- Inflammation of the brain and spinal cord
- Nerve pain
- Shooting pains, numbness, or tingling in the hands or feet
- Problems with short-term memory

It is always best to avoid the source of Lyme disease, blacklegged ticks, by taking precautions when you are in their habitat.

- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails.
- Repel Ticks with DEET or Permethrin

- Use repellents that contain 20 to 30% DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5% permethrin. It remains protective through several washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and may provide longer-lasting protection.
- Other repellents registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may be found at Insect Repellents:

Upon returning from a hike in the woods, one should take the following actions:

- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within 2 hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that may have hitched a ride on your body.
- Ticks like to hide. Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in their hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats, and day packs.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill remaining ticks. (Some research suggests that shorter drying times may also be effective, particularly if the clothing is not wet.)

What to do if you find a tick on a person or dog:

- Contact the Jackson County Communicable Disease department at 517-768-1662 to inquire about submitting the tick for testing.

You can make your yard less attractive to ticks depending on how you landscape. Here are some simple landscaping techniques found in the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station guidebook that can help reduce tick populations:

- Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- Place a 3-ft wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas and around patios and play equipment. This will restrict tick migration into recreational areas.

- Mow the lawn frequently and keep leaves raked.
- Stack wood neatly and in a dry area (discourages rodents that ticks feed on).
- Keep playground equipment, decks, and patios away from yard edges and trees and place them in a sunny location, if possible.
- Remove any old furniture, mattresses, or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.

Don't forget about your pets and livestock. The following information is good practice and is provided by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services:

- Grooming to detect ticks and prompt removal will help to minimize the risk of contracting Lyme disease. Ticks can be removed with tweezers by grasping the mouth parts of the tick adjacent to the skin and gently pulling back. If not done properly, the mouth parts of the tick can remain imbedded in the animal. If you are uncertain about the proper method for removing ticks, consult your veterinarian.
- Tick prevention and tick-killing products are available for cats and dogs. Vaccines are available for dogs. Consult your veterinarian to determine if vaccination and tick prevention measures are recommended in your area. If you plan to travel with your pet, you may need to take precautions to prevent tick exposure when away from home.
- Dogs infected with Lyme disease may display symptoms which include fever, loss of appetite, depression, lethargy, swelling and pain in one or more joints, shifting leg lameness, kidney disease, heart disease and nervous system disorders.
- Most cats do not exhibit symptoms of Lyme disease but the signs of illness in cats are similar to those in dogs and may also include eye problems, breathing disorders and possible sudden collapse.
- Diagnosis of Lyme disease in pets is based on risk of exposure, clinical symptoms and blood testing.
- Lyme disease in pets is treated with antibiotics. With early detection, animals may experience relief of symptoms within 24 hours of treatment. Chronic cases require longer periods of treatment.

Additional information can be found at the following links:

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)

https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711_77928---,00.html

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79136_79608_85016-26945--,00.html

Michigan Lyme Disease Association

<https://www.facebook.com/www.MichiganLymeDiseaseAssociation/>

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

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