Public Health Agency of Canada
Agence de la santé publique du Canada

Don't let a SMALL PEST turn into a BIG PROBLEM

Lyme disease is on the rise in Canada. Prevention is easier than you think.

Take a few minutes to inform yourself about the potential risks and the simple ways you can protect your family from tick bites, infection, and the long-term effects of Lyme disease.

CAN MY PET GET OR SPREAD LYME DISEASE?

Although pets, particularly dogs, can contract Lyme disease, there is no evidence that they can spread the infection directly to people. Pets can, however, carry infected ticks into homes and yards. Like people, the best protection for your pets is to avoid Lyme-infected tick bites. If possible, keep pets out of the woods and do regular tick checks.

The most common symptom of Lyme disease in pets is arthritic pain, with some having fatigue and fever. Contact your veterinarian if you suspect your pet may have Lyme disease or to discuss appropriate measures to protect your pet.

PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOUR PETS FROM LYME DISEASE

WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease is the most common disease spread by ticks in Canada, caused by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Lyme disease can have serious symptoms but it can be treated effectively if caught early.

While not all blacklegged ticks carry Lyme disease, populations of infected blacklegged ticks are growing. This means that the risk of contracting Lyme disease is on the rise across Canada. Take steps to reduce your risk if you spend time outdoors in areas where there may be ticks.

Ticks can be as small as a poppy seed and their bites are usually painless, so you may not know you've been bitten. That's why it's important to be on the lookout for ticks and the symptoms of Lyme disease.

For more information on how to prevent, recognize and take action on Lyme disease, visit:

Canada.ca/LymeDisease

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PRINT
Cat.: HP40-112/2014E
ISBN: 978-1-100-25948-2

PDF
Cat.: HP40-112/2014E-PDF
ISBN: 978-1-100-24624-6

Pub.: 140108

Lyme disease is a serious illness that is spread by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks, found most often near wooded areas in Canada's southern regions. It can have severe symptoms, but it's also easy to prevent and treat when caught early.

Canada

WHERE ARE TICKS FOUND?

Blacklegged ticks are most often found in forests and the overgrown areas between the woods and open spaces, although it is possible to be bitten outside of these areas.

The Public Health Agency of Canada works with provincial and territorial health authorities to identify where populations of infected blacklegged ticks have been established or are spreading. The following are areas where blacklegged tick populations have been confirmed or are establishing:

- Southern British Columbia
- Southeastern and south-central Manitoba
- Southern and eastern Ontario
- Southern Quebec
- Southern New Brunswick and Grand Manan Island
- South shore and northern mainland Nova Scotia

Surveillance is ongoing to confirm other areas of spread. Visit Canada.ca/LymeDisease for the most up-to-date information.

Ticks don't move far by themselves but they can attach to migratory birds, and may fall off far from their original location. For this reason, it is possible to find infected ticks in other areas than the ones listed above.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID TICK BITES?

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to prevent tick bites. Here are some ways to protect yourself if you venture into forests or overgrown areas between the woods and open spaces:

- Wear closed-toe shoes, long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Pull your socks over your pant legs to prevent ticks from crawling up your legs.
- Wear light-coloured clothes to spot ticks easier.
- Use bug spray containing DEET or Icaridin on your skin and clothing.
- Shower or bathe within two hours of being outdoors to wash away loose ticks.
- Do daily "full body" check for ticks on yourself, your children and your pets.

Ticks can be infected with more than one type of bacteria that can cause human illness. Guarding against tick bites will protect you from more than just Lyme disease.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET BITTEN?

Removing ticks within 24-36 hours usually prevents infection. Using clean tweezers, grasp the head as close to the skin as possible and pull slowly straight out. Afterwards, wash the bite with soap and water or disinfect with alcohol or hand sanitizer. If mouthparts break off and remain in the skin, remove them with tweezers or, if you are unable to remove them easily, leave them alone and let the skin heal. If possible, save the tick that bit you in a zip-lock bag and record the date of the bite.

If you develop symptoms of Lyme disease in the weeks after you are bitten, contact your health care provider right away. If you have saved the tick, bring it to your medical appointment as it may help the doctor in their assessment of your illness.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE?

Initial symptoms differ from person to person, which makes Lyme disease very difficult to diagnose. Some will experience mild symptoms like fever or a skin rash soon after being bitten, while others may suffer severe symptoms, but not for weeks after the bite.

Signs and symptoms of Lyme disease can include one or a combination of the following with varying degrees of severity:

- Fatigue
- Fever or chills
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain, spasms, or weakness
- Numbness or tingling
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Skin rash
- Cognitive dysfunction, dizziness
- Nervous system disorders
- Arthritis and arthritic symptoms
- Heart palpitations

Untreated, symptoms can last years and include recurring arthritis and neurological problems, numbness and paralysis. Although not common, fatalities from Lyme disease have been reported.

HOW IS LYME DISEASE DIAGNOSED?

Diagnosing Lyme disease can be difficult as symptoms vary from one person to another, and can be similar to other infectious diseases that are spread by ticks. The earlier you receive a diagnosis, the greater the chances of a successful treatment. As such, it is important to consult a health care professional as early as possible if you have symptoms or if you feel unwell in the weeks following a tick bite. Your healthcare provider will likely:

- Examine your symptoms
- Determine if you were potentially exposed to Lyme-infected blacklegged ticks by asking about your recent activities
- If necessary, laboratory blood testing can be used to further support a clinical diagnosis

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease can be effectively treated with 2 to 4 weeks of antibiotics. Depending on your symptoms, and if you are diagnosed in the later stages of the disease, you may require a longer course of antibiotics.

Some people experience symptoms that continue more than 6 months after treatment. Research continues into the causes of these persistent symptoms and methods of treatment.

For more information and helpful tips, visit: **Canada.ca/LymeDisease**