Lyme Disease & Tick Safety

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that can be caused by the bite of an infected deer tick (also known as a blacklegged tick). Untreated, the disease can cause a number of health problems. Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stages of infection usually recover rapidly and completely. There are about 30,000 confirmed cases of Lyme disease reported every year.

Note: This map depicts an approximate distribution of predicted Lyme disease risk in the United States. The true relative risk in any given county compared with other counties might differ from that shown here and might change from year to year. Information on risk distribution within states and counties is best obtained from state and local public health authorities.
Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at or near ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush, and shrubs, usually no more that 18-24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods, and around stone walls.

Deer ticks cannot jump or fly and do not drop onto passing people or animals. They get on humans and animals only by direct contact. Once a tick does get on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a moist protected area.

Here are some ways to protect yourself while spending time in the outdoors:

- Wear light colored clothing.
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and tuck shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks.
- Consider using an insect repellent with 20-30% DEET—be sure to follow the directions closely.
- Stay on cleared, well traveled trails; avoid contacting vegetation whenever possible.
- Take a shower as soon as possible after being in outdoor areas where ticks may inhabit.
- Do a final full-body tick check at the end of the day and remove ticks promptly.
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.

Action Items:

Check the body carefully for ticks; once found, promptly remove them with tweezers. (Grasp the tick firmly and as close to the skin as possible. With a steady motion, pull the tick’s body away from the skin. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic. DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products to remove the tick.)

Resources & References

CDC Webpage on Lyme Disease: https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html
UConn Magazine Article on Why You Should Never Flush a Tick: https://magazine.uconn.edu/2018/05/08/never-flush-tick/

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Adapted from the Cornell Local Roads Program—New York LTAP Center’s
Everyday Safety Tailgate Talk
Protecting Yourself from

Ticks and Mosquitoes

Outdoor workers may be exposed to vector-borne diseases spread from the bites of infected ticks and mosquitoes. Ticks and mosquitoes may carry bacteria, parasites or viruses.

One of the most common tick-borne diseases in the U.S. is Lyme disease. Ticks are found in wooded areas, high grass, or leaf litter. They are most active during the spring, summer and fall, but in warmer areas may be active all year round.

One of the most common diseases carried by mosquitoes in the U.S. is West Nile virus infection. Mosquitoes may be found near standing water, or in weedy or wooded areas. They are usually most active during dawn and dusk in the warmer months.

Symptoms of Vector-borne Diseases
- Body/muscle aches
- Fever
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Joint pain
- Rash
- Stiff neck
- Paralysis

Workplace Controls

Decrease tick populations:
- Remove leaf litter.
- Remove, mow, or cut back tall grass and brush.
- Discourage deer activity.

Eliminate standing water to decrease mosquito populations:
- Remove, turn over, cover, or store equipment.
- Remove debris from ditches.
- Fill in areas that collect standing water.
- Place drain holes in containers that collect water and cannot be discarded.

Protect Yourself

- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing (so ticks can be easily spotted), including long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into boots or socks.
- Use insect repellents.
  - Use repellents containing 20–50% DEET on exposed skin and clothing.
  - Reapply repellents as needed. (Always follow product labels).
- Use insecticides such as permethrin for greater protection.
  - Permethrin can be used on clothing, but not on skin.
  - One application to pants, socks, and shoes may be effective through several washings.
- Check skin and clothing for ticks daily. Check hair, underarms, and groin.
- Immediately remove ticks using fine-tipped tweezers.
  - Grasp the tick firmly, as close to your skin as possible.
  - Pull the tick’s body away from your skin with a steady motion.
  - Clean the area with soap and water.

- Wash and dry work clothes using the “hot” settings to kill any ticks present.
- If you develop symptoms of a vector-borne disease, seek medical attention promptly. Tell your doctor that you work outdoors and report any ticks or mosquito bites.
Tailgate Safety Talk Sign In Sheet

Topic: Lyme Disease & Tick Safety

Agency: ____________________________________________________________

Crew: ____________________________________________________________

Supervisor/Talk Leader: ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

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