



KILLINGWORTH HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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More Ticks Means More Precaution

Spring is here and so are the ticks that spread Lyme disease, along with many other diseases. We are experiencing an increase in the tick population (and the percent infected with Lyme disease) likely due to warmer winter temperatures the past two years. The CT Agricultural Experiment Station has received over 450 ticks this year and found that 38% tested positive for Lyme disease spirochetes, along with other positive tests for the causative agents for babesiosis and granulocytic anaplasmosis.

Lyme disease affects an estimated 329,000 people in the U.S. each year and can cause severe damage to joints and the nervous system. Peak months for acquiring infection in CT are May through July. There are simple, effective steps that can be taken to help prevent tick bites and tick-borne diseases. Personal protection measures and conducting tick checks remain the most effective ways to reduce the risk of tick-borne disease.

Ticks grasp passing hosts from leaf litter, tips of grass, and shrubbery. Most ticks are probably picked up on the lower legs and then crawl up the body to find a place to feed. Adult ticks will, however, look for a host in the shrub layer several feet above the ground, about or above the height of children. Tick nymphs (the stage before they become adult ticks) are small and often overlooked or mistaken for freckles.

Here are tips to protect yourself:

- ✓ Avoid tall grass and over-grown, brushy areas.
- ✓ When hiking in wooded areas, stay in the middle of trails.
- ✓ Consider using insect repellent, according to manufacturer's instructions. Shoes and clothes can also be treated.
- ✓ If you are walking in grassy or wooded areas tuck your pant leg into your socks, wear long-sleeved shirts, and closed shoes so your skin is not exposed.
- ✓ Wear light-colored clothing to make it easier to see the ticks for removal.
- ✓ Protect your pet
- ✓ When returning indoors, shower using a wash cloth or puff to remove any unattached ticks.
- ✓ Examine yourself, children, and pets for ticks when returning indoors.

For more information about ticks and tick-borne diseases, including what to do if you find a tick, contact the Killingworth Health Department at (860) 663-1765, x223 or visit the CT Department of Public Health website at www.ct.gov/dph/ticks or call (860) 509-7995.

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