

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Public Health Department

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St. Lawrence County Public Health reminds residents to look out for ticks!

Spring has finally arrived in the North Country! Unfortunately, so has the start of tick season. The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department would like to remind residents to take precautions in order to keep themselves and their families tick free.

The deer tick is the only tick that carries the bacteria causing Lyme disease. Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They like to cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs usually no more than 18-24 inches off the ground. Ticks also live in lawns and gardens, edges of woods, and around old stone walls. Deer ticks cannot jump or fly, they only get on humans and animals by direct contact. Once a tick gets on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a protected area such as, the scalp, armpits, groin, and behind the ears. According to a 2017 study conducted by the New York State Department of Health, 50.9% of deer ticks in St. Lawrence County tested positive for carrying the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, which is why it is critical residents take precautions when enjoying the outdoors.

To protect yourself from a tick bite, you should take the following precautions:

1. Wear light colored clothing to easily spot ticks, wear enclosed shoes, long pants and long-sleeves, and tuck pant legs into socks or boots.
2. Use bug spray containing 20% or more of DEET and spray on shoes, clothing and hats. Avoid spraying directly onto the skin.
3. Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.
4. Bathe or shower as soon as possible after going indoors to wash off and more easily find ticks.
5. Put clothing in the dryer for 20 minutes to kill possible unfound ticks.
6. Most importantly, do a **full-body** tick check at the end of each day. The sooner you remove a tick from your body; the chances of the tick infecting you with the bacteria decreases.

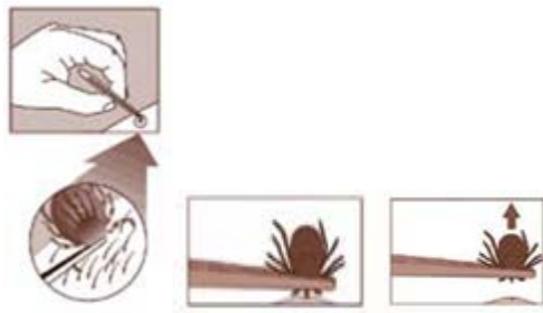
To reduce ticks in your yard, you can:

1. Keep lawns mowed and edges trimmed.
2. Clear brush, leaf litter and tall grass around the house, and at the edges of gardens and stone walls.
3. Keep the ground under bird feeders clean so small animals that can carry ticks are not attracted to your yard.

4. Place children's swing sets and other play equipment in a sunny, dry area of the yard, away from the woods where ticks can be abundant.
5. Stack woodpiles neatly away from the house and preferably off the ground.

If you do find a tick on your body, stay calm! Not all deer ticks are infected, and your risk of Lyme disease is significantly reduced if the tick is removed within the first 36 hours. To remove a tick:

1. Use a pair of pointed tweezers, and grasp the tick by the head or mouth, where they enter the skin.
2. Firmly pull the tick in a steady, upward motion. DO NOT jerk or twist the tick.
3. Clean the bite wound with soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide.
4. Monitor the site of the bite for the next 30 days for the appearance of the rash. If you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately.



When removing a tick, it is very important you keep the following in mind: **Do not** squeeze the tick; this will cause the tick to regurgitate its bacteria directly into the place where it is feeding. **Do not** pour kerosene or essential oils on the tick; this does not make the removal process easier. **Do not** rub vaseline on the tick; this will not suffocate the tick. **Do not** use a smoldering match or cigarette butt. Tick removal can be tricky, but if you follow the tick removal process listed above, you will be able to properly and safely remove a tick from your body.

For more information on ticks and Lyme disease, visit our website at:

https://www.stlawco.org/Departments/PublicHealth/LymeDisease_WestNileVirus or call the Public Health Department at 315-386-2325.