

LYME DISEASE INCREASING IN MICHIGAN

District Health Department #10 provides tips for preventing Lyme Disease

Michigan in the summer is the perfect place for outdoor fun and adventure. It is also becoming a haven for ticks that cause Lyme disease. In fact, cases of Lyme disease are on the rise in Michigan, including in some counties within the District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) ten-county service area.

The Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS) reports that Michigan had 155 confirmed cases of Lyme disease in 2016, up from 125 cases in 2015 and 93 cases in 2014. Within the DHD#10 service area, Manistee county had 5 confirmed cases in 2016 compared to 3 in 2015 and 3 in 2014. Mecosta county had 3 confirmed cases in 2016, up from 0 cases in 2015 and 1 case in 2014. Mason county had 1 case in 2016, down from 2 cases in 2015 and 0 cases in 2014. Oceana had one case in 2016, down from 6 cases in 2015 and 0 cases in 2014. Newaygo county had 1 case reported in 2015. The rest of the counties, including Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Missaukee, and Wexford, had no reported cases of Lyme disease in the past three years.

Scientists say the increase in the tick population is typically caused from mild winters that allow oak trees to produce more acorns, which, in turn, feed the mice, and more mice means more blood supply for ticks. DHD#10 Medical Director, Dr. Jennifer Morse, says the increase in cases may also be from an upsurge in reporting. "Laboratory results from individuals tested for Lyme Disease are often automatically entered in the MDSS," states Dr. Morse. "This direct reporting allows for improved identification of cases of Lyme Disease, likely contributing to higher numbers." Dr. Morse also explains that reports for confirmed cases are based on where residents live, not where they may have contracted the bacterium. For example, if a person traveled to the Upper Peninsula and was bitten by a tick, but lives in Mason County, the report will indicate that the confirmed case of Lyme disease is in Mason County.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Lyme disease is caused by bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks, sometimes referred to as deer ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans, often in the shape of a bullseye.

If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. Lyme disease is diagnosed based on symptoms, physical findings (e.g., rash), and the possibility of exposure to infected ticks. Laboratory testing is helpful if used correctly and performed with validated methods. Most cases of Lyme Disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics.

Exposure to ticks is highest in the woods and in the edge area between lawns and woods; however, ticks can also be carried by animals onto lawns and gardens and into houses by pets. It is possible for someone to contract Lyme disease through a blood transfusion; however, there is no evidence that Lyme disease is transmitted from person-to-person through touching, kissing, or having intercourse with a person with Lyme disease. There are also no reports of Lyme disease transmission through breast milk.



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COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford
Kalkaska
Lake
Manistee
Mason
Mecosta
Missaukee
Newaygo
Oceana
Wexford



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Protect yourself from Lyme disease by decreasing your chances of being bitten by a tick through the following steps:

1. Avoid tick-infested areas and walk in the center of trails to avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter.
2. Use insect repellent containing 20% concentration of DEET on clothes and exposed skin.
3. Perform daily tick checks and remove attached ticks with tweezers.
4. Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors.
5. Tumble dry clothing in a hot dryer for 10 minutes to kill any ticks that are attached.

If you believe you've been bitten by a tick, or have developed illness within a few weeks of a tick bite, see your health care provider right away. Contact DHD#10 for more information on infectious diseases in your area at 888-217-3904. Visit the CDC website for more information on Lyme disease at www.cdc.gov/lyme.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.

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