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News from the Meriden Department of Health and Human Services

165 Miller Street * 203-630-4226 * www.meridenhealth.com

Environmental Health –Spring/Summer Health Reminders

Lyme Disease, Powassan Virus, and Other Tick-Borne Illnesses

The most common symptoms of tick-related illnesses are:

- **Fever/chills:** With all tick-borne diseases, patients can experience fever at varying degrees and time of onset.
- **Aches and pains:** Tick-borne disease symptoms include headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. With Lyme disease you may also experience joint pain. The severity and time of onset of these symptoms can depend on the disease and the patient's personal tolerance level.
- **Rash:** some tick-borne illnesses, such as Lyme Disease, southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI), Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF), ehrlichiosis, and tularemia can result in distinctive rashes. If you notice a rash after being bit by a tick please call your doctor.



How to remove a tick

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.
4. Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Prevention

- **Avoid tick-infested areas:** If in these areas avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, etc. Try to stay in the center of the path. The tick latches on when you brush against it.
- **Use insect repellent:** Spray your clothes and exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET, 20-30%.
- **Wear protective clothing:** long pants, long sleeves, light colored clothes. Tuck pants into socks. Wash clothes in hot water and place in dryer for at least 30 minutes to kill tick.
- **Perform daily tick checks:** Always check your body for ticks after being outdoors, even the back yard. If you can't see a spot or area on your body, run your hand across the surface and if you feel a bump have someone check it for you. It is helpful to run your

hand across body parts you can see as well, because the ticks are so small you may mistake for freckle or not see at all.

- **Yard checks:** Keep grass cut short, remove leaf litter and tall weeds, try and keep pets out of woods, and move swing sets and play areas away from wooded areas.

You can submit ticks to our office at 165 Miller Street for testing. Please note the tests do take longer in the warmer months, sometimes up to 1 month.

Rabies

As the summer weather arrives so do possible interactions between wild animals and people



and their pets. In Connecticut, rabies is usually carried by skunks, raccoons, and bats but any mammal could carry the disease.

Here are simple precautions that you can take:

- Vaccinate your pets. Be sure your pet dogs, cats, and other animals are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations. Pets too young to be vaccinated should be kept indoors and allowed outside only under direct observation. Your veterinarian can let you know if your pet is too young to be vaccinated.
- Keep family pets indoors at night. Don't leave them outside unattended or let them roam free.
- Don't attract wild animals to your home or yard. Keep your property free of stored bird seed or other foods that may attract wild animals. Feed pets indoors. Tightly cap or put away garbage cans.
- Don't feed, touch or adopt wild animals, stray dogs or cats. Enjoy wildlife from a distance. If you see an animal that is sick, injured or orphaned, call Animal Control (numbers are below). Do not handle the animal yourself.
- Get wild animals removed from your home. If nuisance wild animals are living in parts of your home, consult with a nuisance wildlife control expert about having them removed.
- Teach children not to touch any animal they do not know and to tell an adult immediately if they are bitten by any animal.
- Let wild animals wander away if they are on your property. Bring children and pets indoors and alert neighbors who are outside.
- Report all animal bites or contact with wild animals to your local health department. If possible, do not let any animal escape that has possibly exposed someone to rabies.

To learn more about rabies visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/rabies. For further information, contact the Meriden Department of Health and Human Services at (203) 630-4226 or Meriden Animal Control at (203) 235-4179. For sick or injured animals, please call (203) 238-1911 and a dispatcher will notify the on-call Animal Control Officer. Sick or injured animals can be DANGEROUS. Please call immediately and keep away from a sick or injured animal.

West Nile Virus

WNV is an illness caused by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected after feeding on birds that carry the virus. The following are tips to protect against West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses:



- Minimize time outdoors at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active. If you are outside during this time, consider using mosquito repellent and follow the directions on the label. The most effective repellents contain DEET or Picaridin.
- When using DEET, use the lowest concentration effective for the time spent outdoors (for example, 6% lasts approximately 2 hours and 20% for 4 hours) and wash treated skin when returning indoors. Do not apply under clothing, to wounds or irritated skin, the hands of children, or to infants less than 2 months of age.
- Be sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors during dusk and dawn, or when in mosquito-infested areas, such as wetlands or woods.

Take these measures to reduce mosquitoes around the home:

- Look for standing water after rainstorms. Dump water out of any container or object that can hold standing water, such as ceramic pots, tires, and wading pools.
- Clean clogged roof gutters.
- Change water in bird baths on a weekly basis.
- Drain any collected water from pool covers on a weekly basis.
- Use landscaping techniques to eliminate areas where water can collect on your property.