



City of Meriden, Connecticut

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



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Public Health Summer Safety Series – Week 1: Lyme Disease and Powassan Virus – Get the Facts

(May 23, 2017) – Summer is here, and that means an increase in tick-borne illnesses. The Meriden Department of Health and Human Services would like to remind residents ways they can prevent tick borne illnesses while enjoying the outdoors this summer.

The most common tick-borne illness in Connecticut is Lyme Disease. Lyme Disease is caused by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. It is known for the bullseye rash it causes (called Erythema migrans), but not everyone will get the rash. Other signs include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes.

More recently, a new tick-borne illness called Powassan virus was seen in Connecticut. Powassan is rare but more dangerous than Lyme. Symptoms range from a fever to severe neurological disease, and can include seizures, headaches, vomiting, confusion, speech difficulties and loss of coordination. The virus can also cause meningitis and encephalitis. There is no known cure for Powassan, named for the place where it was first identified in 1958 in Powassan, Ontario.

Tick-borne diseases can be prevented. Follow these steps:

- Remove leaf litter and clear grasses and brush around the edges of your lawn. Mow your lawn often.
- Place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to reduce the chance of ticks coming into your yard.
- Keep the ground under bird feeders clean.
- Stack wood neatly and in dry areas away from where you frequently go.
- Check yourself, your children, and your pets for ticks every day and remove them right away. Ticks are small and may look like a new freckle or a speck of dirt.
- If you hike, stay on the trails. Avoid walking through high grass and bushy areas.
- Use insect repellents that are EPA-registered and contain ingredients shown to be effective against ticks such as DEET or picaridin. Follow the directions on the label carefully.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts to minimize skin exposure to ticks. Wear light colored clothing so that it is easier to see ticks and tuck your pants into your socks.
- Talk to your veterinarian about tick prevention treatment for your pets.



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If you find a tick on someone, follow these steps to remove it:

- Using a pair of pointed tweezers, grasp the tick by the head or mouthparts right where they enter the skin. DO NOT grasp the tick by the body.
- 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.
- Wash your hands and the area of the bite with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.
- Be sure to tell your doctor about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred, and where you most likely got bit by the tick.

This summer, look for free summer safety emergency kits from the Meriden Department of Health and Human Services at community events. The kit will contain sunscreen, bug spray, tweezers, band aids and tick removal cards. Additional information about tick-borne diseases and other summer safety public health issues is available at the Department (165 Miller Street); you can also call 203-630-4226 or visit www.meridenhealth.com.

Written by Desiree Rondeau, Public Health Intern.