



May 2016

RE: Lyme Disease Awareness

Dear Principals, Staff, Parents, Guardians, and Students:

It's a great time of year to enjoy the outdoors, but we need to be aware and careful in areas where there may be blacklegged ticks (also called deer ticks). These are very small ticks - sometimes as small as the period at the end of this sentence. They can carry the germ that causes a bacterial infection called Lyme disease. Deer ticks are found across Nova Scotia - so please share this letter with teachers, staff, students, parents and guardians.

Follow these steps to help protect against ticks, especially in grassy, wooded or shrub covered areas:

- Apply insect repellents containing DEET or Icaridin to exposed skin and clothes. Follow directions on the package carefully.
- Wear light colored long sleeved shirts and pants, closed-toed shoes, and tuck shirts into pants, and pant legs into socks.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Put playground equipment in sunny, dry places away from wooded areas, yard edges, and trees.
- Check your whole body for ticks and, when possible, take a bath or shower within two hours of coming indoors. This makes it easier to find ticks and washes away loose ones.
- If you find ticks, here's how to remove them safely:
 - Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
 - Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.
 - Clean and disinfect the site with soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide.
 - Dispose of the tick in a sealed plastic bag and put in the garbage.
 - Do NOT burn, squeeze or coax a tick's mouthparts from your skin using other methods.

The first symptom of Lyme disease is usually a rash that may look like a bull's eye target near the tick bite. The rash can appear anywhere from 3-30 days after the bite. Symptoms such as fever, headache, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in the joints and general body aches and pains may develop. Symptoms may appear over a period of months. If symptoms appear, it is very important to contact a health care provider. Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics

To access a great educational video for kids about how to protect against tick bites, and to learn more about Lyme disease and blacklegged ticks, visit <http://www.novascotia.ca/hpp/cdpc/lyme.asp> - or call your local Public Health office at 902-481-5800.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Noella Whelan".

Noella Whelan, Public Health Manager
Halifax, Eastern Shore and West Hants, Nova Scotia Health Authority

Tick Talk

It's a great time of year to start enjoying time outside. When outside, it is important to be careful in long grass, wooded or shrub covered areas where there may be blacklegged ticks (also called deer ticks). These are very small ticks - sometimes as small as the period at the end of this sentence. These ticks can carry the germ that causes a bacterial infection called Lyme disease.



Deer ticks



Bulls -eye rash



Tick habitat



Prevent tick bites

Help protect yourself and your family whenever you enjoy the outdoors by:

- Applying insect repellents containing DEET or Icaridin to exposed skin and clothes.
- Wearing light colored long sleeved shirts and pants, closed shoes, and tucking pant legs into socks.
- Keeping lawns mowed short.
- Putting playground equipment in sunny, dry places away from wooded areas, yard edges, and trees.
- Checking your whole body for ticks and, when possible, taking a bath or shower within two hours of coming indoors. This makes it easier to find ticks.

Tick checks can help prevent Lyme disease. If the tick carries the bacteria, it can only pass Lyme disease to a human or animal after it has filled itself with blood. This takes 24 hours. Removing the tick as soon as possible may help to stop the spread of Lyme disease into the body.

Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. The earliest and most common symptom of Lyme disease is a bulls-eye rash at the site of the bite. You may also develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headaches, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in the joints, and aches and pains all over your body. Symptoms may appear in stages and may appear over a period of months. If you have these symptoms after a tick bite, contact your healthcare provider.

- For a great video for kids and for more information on Lyme disease, visit <http://www.novascotia.ca/hpp/cdpc/lyme.asp> and contact your local Public Health office.
- For ideas on landscape management around parks, buildings and homes, visit <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/documents/Landscape-Management-Handbook.pdf>

Enjoy the outdoors safely

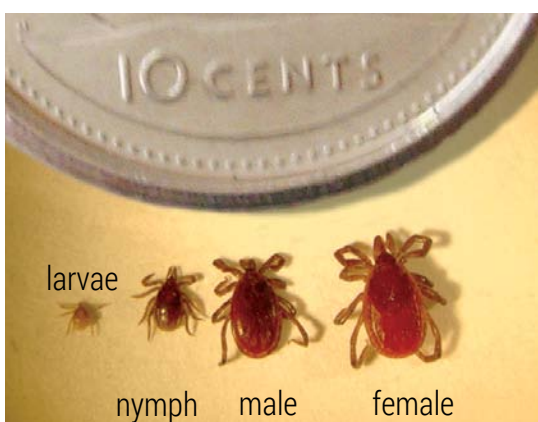
Lyme Disease

Protect yourself from tick bites



Protect yourself from tick bites while enjoying the outdoors:

- **Cover as much of your skin as possible.**
Wear enclosed shoes.
Tuck your shirt into your pants.
Tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- **Use insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin on exposed skin.**
Follow directions on the label.
Do not use DEET or Icaridin on children under 6 months.
- **Check yourself, your children, and your pets after your walk.**
Include armpits, groin, and scalp.
Remove ticks from skin promptly and carefully using tweezers.
See our pamphlet for more information.



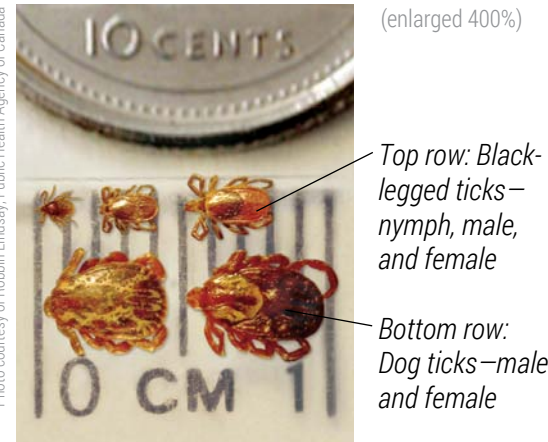
Blacklegged ticks (enlarged 550%)

Only Blacklegged ticks may carry Lyme disease. This photo shows what the ticks look like at different stages.

For more information, go to novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc, or call your local Public Health office.

How can I recognize a blacklegged tick?

Nova Scotia has many types of ticks. For Lyme disease, the tick of concern is the blacklegged tick, also called the deer tick. In the photo below, you can see the difference between the blacklegged tick that can carry Lyme disease and the dog (or wood) tick that does not.



(enlarged 400%)

Top row: Blacklegged ticks—nymph, male, and female

Bottom row: Dog ticks—male and female

Blacklegged ticks are smaller than dog ticks. They have no white markings on the large part of their body. Dog ticks usually have white markings or silver-coloured spots.

Despite their name, blacklegged ticks do not always have black legs.

Blacklegged ticks in the nymphal stage and adult female blacklegged ticks can transmit Lyme disease. Compared to the adult blacklegged ticks, the nymphal tick is very small (1 to 3 mm).

Where are blacklegged ticks found?

Blacklegged ticks have been found in all parts of Nova Scotia. No matter where you live, there is a chance that you have come into contact with a blacklegged tick.

There are several areas in Nova Scotia where blacklegged ticks have become established and are more likely to be found. You can get information about these locations at: novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp

Blacklegged ticks thrive in damp woods and forests where there is shade and leaf litter to provide cover.

Blacklegged ticks cannot jump or fly. They find hosts by climbing vegetation like grasses or shrubs and waiting for a host to rub against them. They then climb onto the host's body and try to attach and feed.

Adult blacklegged ticks are most active in the spring and fall. They remain active until the first snowfall or until the air temperature is consistently below 4°C. Larvae and nymphs are most active in the spring and summer.

Ticks can come into your home on pets or clothing but most homes are too dry for ticks to live for more than a few days.

How can I reduce the number of blacklegged ticks around my home?

You can't get rid of ticks completely, but you can reduce the number with landscaping and yard maintenance.

- Keep your yard sunny and dry. Prune bushes and trees to let in sunlight and air.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Remove leaf litter.
- Clear tall grasses and brush around your home and at the edge of your lawn.
- Put children's swings, slides and sandboxes in sunny dry places away from yard edges and trees.

- Place wood chips or gravel between your lawn and any wooded areas. This will stop ticks from moving into areas used by family and pets.
- Keep the ground under bird feeders clean. Place feeders in dry sunny places away from your house.
- Add hard surfaces—like decking, stone, tiling, or gravel—around your house and property. Use these surfaces for outdoor activities.
- Keep your woodpile neat, dry, off the ground, and away from your house.

For more information

To learn more about Lyme disease and blacklegged ticks:

- Call your local Public Health office.
- Visit the Health and Wellness website. The website will be updated regularly with any new information about Lyme disease and the spread of infected ticks. novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp

Public Health Offices:

Amherst	667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish	867-4500 Ext 4800
Bridgewater	543-0850
Dartmouth	481-5800
New Glasgow	752-5151
Sydney	563-2400
Truro	893-5820
Wolfville	542-6310
Yarmouth	742-7141

Aussi disponible en français



Enjoy the outdoors safely

Lyme Disease

Protect yourself from tick bites



Photo courtesy of Robbin Lindsay, Public Health Agency of Canada
Health and Wellness would like to thank the NS Museum of Natural History, NS Department of Natural Resources, Queen Elizabeth II Laboratory, and Public Health Agency of Canada for their assistance with this pamphlet.
06037/MAY15 REV15-16



What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection. Lyme disease can be serious if it is not treated.

How do you get Lyme disease?

You can only get Lyme disease from the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. You cannot get Lyme disease from touching, kissing or being near an infected person.

Blacklegged ticks normally feed on wild birds and mammals, but will also bite humans and domestic animals—like dogs, cats, and horses. Ticks stick to skin and feed on blood. They bite in the spring, summer and fall. Tick bites are often painless, so you may not know that you've been bitten.

In Nova Scotia, only the blacklegged tick carries the bacteria which causes Lyme disease, but not all blacklegged ticks are infected. Even if a tick carries the bacteria, it can only pass Lyme disease to a human or animal after it has filled itself with blood. This takes at least 24 hours.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

The first symptom of Lyme disease is usually a rash near the tick bite. The rash may look like a bull's eye target (see the photo below). The rash usually appears between 7 and 10 days after the bite, but can appear any time between 3 and 30 days.

You may also develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headaches, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in the joints, and aches and pains all over your body. Symptoms may appear in stages and may appear over a period of months.

Contact a health care provider if symptoms appear after a tick bite.

It is very helpful to know if and when you've been bitten by a tick and to know the symptoms of Lyme disease. This is because a health care provider will use your symptoms, the likelihood that you've been bitten by a tick, and sometimes a blood test, to diagnose Lyme disease.



Bull's eye rash

Photo: N.Y. Medical College

How is Lyme disease treated?

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. Early treatment almost always results in a full recovery.

Lyme disease is rarely life threatening, but if it is not treated, serious symptoms or illnesses may develop. These are not common, but can include facial palsy, heart problems, or chronic joint problems such as arthritis. Lyme disease symptoms can also be treated by antibiotics. Occasionally, the symptoms may continue if treatment has been delayed for too long.

How can I prevent Lyme disease?

You can prevent Lyme disease by avoiding blacklegged ticks, checking often for tick bites, and removing ticks before they do any harm.

If you are in an area where blacklegged ticks are found:

1. Protect yourself from ticks.

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET or Icaridin. Follow the directions on the package carefully. Use is different for different ages. Do not use DEET or Icaridin on babies less than 6 months old.
- Cover as much of your skin as possible whenever you are in an area where ticks are found. Wear enclosed shoes. Tuck your shirt into your pants. Tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Wear light coloured clothing with a tight weave. This will help you to see ticks more easily.
- Walk along well-traveled paths. Stick to the centre of the trail and avoid contact with the longer grass and vegetation along the trail's edge.

2. Check yourself, your children, and your pets after walking in grassy or wooded areas.

- Check clothing for unattached ticks.
- Check the body carefully. Feel for bumps and look for brown spots on the skin. Pay special attention to armpits, the back of the knees, and the groin or pelvic region.
- Take a bath or shower within 2 hours of being outdoors. This can help you to find ticks attached to the body quickly.

3. Remove ticks as soon as you find them.

- Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers. Get as close to the skin as you can.
- Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.
- Wash the site with soap and water. Disinfect with rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide to avoid other infections.

4. Record the date and location of the tick bite.

- Contact your health care provider right away if a rash appears or you develop flu-like symptoms after a tick bite.