



MEDIA RELEASE

Information **Advisory** **Warning** **Update**

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St. Clair County Health Department Cautions Residents About Ticks

With summer approaching, the St. Clair County Health Department would like to inform residents that ticks are currently active in St. Clair County and across Michigan. From May to September, the Health Department actively monitors the population of ticks in the county to identify any changes or migration. The good news is actions can be taken to prevent illnesses spread by ticks, such as Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria and is spread through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks (also known as deer ticks). The presence of the blacklegged tick in Michigan is growing. Based on 2023 data, 79 of Michigan's 83 counties have a known risk for Lyme disease, or potential risk for Lyme disease.

Alicia Hawkins, Environmental Health Sanitarian shared, "*Vector surveillance efforts by the St. Clair County Health Department indicate that blacklegged ticks with the bacteria that causes Lyme disease are present in St. Clair County.*" Hawkins also shared the Health Department can also help in another way, "*Residents can send pictures of ticks to be identified by emailing Vector@stclaircounty.org and we can help verify what type someone may have been exposed to.*"

Ticks can attach to any part of the human body though often found in hard-to-see areas such as the groin, armpits, and scalp. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36-48 hours or more before Lyme disease can be transmitted. Because of this, doing a full-body check to find and remove ticks after spending time outdoors is important. Ticks should be removed by grasping the tick with fine tipped tweezers as close to the skin as possible and pulling upward with steady, even pressure.

If someone is bitten by a tick that is suspected or confirmed to be a blacklegged tick, they should call their healthcare provider. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, and fatigue. Many people, though not all, will get a characteristic “bull’s-eye” skin rash. If untreated, infections can become serious. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics.

Suggestions to help avoid ticks:

Before Going Outdoors:

- Know where to expect ticks. Blacklegged ticks are commonly found in leaf litter within wooded areas, as well as tall grassy areas and shrubs that are low to the ground.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck pants into socks. Wear boots or shoes, not sandals.
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin or buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. For help finding a repellent, use the EPA search tool [Find the Repellent that is Right for You | US EPA](#).

After Coming Indoors:

- Check clothing for ticks. Any ticks found should be removed. Tumble dry clothes on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks after coming indoors.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can get into the home on coats, clothing, pets, and daypacks.
- Do a body check for ticks after being outdoors; under the arms, in and around the hair and ears, inside the belly button, the waist and back, back of the knees, and between the legs and pelvic area.
- Showering within two hours of coming indoors may help wash off unattached ticks; also a good opportunity to do a tick check.

For more information on ticks and Lyme disease visit [Ticks \(michigan.gov\)](#). To learn more about the St. Clair County Health Department’s Tick Surveillance Program, contact the Environmental Health Division at (810) 987-5306. Visit [www.scchealth.co](#) for additional information on St. Clair County Health Department services and follow us on social media @scchdmi.