

May marks National Lyme Disease Awareness Month

Whitby, Ontario – As the weather warms up and outdoor activities increase, Durham Region Health Department reminds everyone to take precautions against tick bites which can lead to Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which can be transmitted through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. Blacklegged ticks are widespread across Durham Region, especially in forested or grassy or brushy areas.

While not all ticks carry Lyme disease, it is important to be vigilant, especially during the spring and early summer when ticks are most active. Nymph stage ticks, which are extremely tiny, are particularly difficult to detect and can pose a higher risk of infection.

Reports of tick bites and Lyme disease infections in Durham Region have increased significantly. In 2025, there were 201 confirmed human cases of Lyme disease compared to 155 cases in 2024. Early detection and prompt removal of ticks are crucial in preventing Lyme disease. Early symptoms of Lyme disease can appear within a few days to a month after a tick bite. Symptoms may include fever, chills, headache, muscle or joint pain, fatigue, stiff neck, swollen lymph nodes, and an expanding red rash that often looks like a bull's-eye target.

If left untreated, Lyme disease can progress to a more serious illness affecting the heart, joints and nervous system. Early treatment with antibiotics is effective.

Residents can help reduce their exposure to Lyme disease by taking precautions. This is especially important if you frequent brushy or forested areas where ticks are most common:

Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks and closed footwear.

Tuck pants into socks and wear light-coloured clothing to spot ticks easily.

Use insect repellent contain-

ing DEET or Picaridin on clothing and exposed skin. Take a shower within one to

two hours of being outdoors and check your body thoroughly for ticks.

Routinely check pets for ticks and consult a veterinarian for long-term protec-

tion. Consult with your local pharmacy to be assessed for

your eligibility to receive the prophylactic dose of antibiotics.

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