



Lake County
Health Department and
Community Health Center

For Immediate Release

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Early Spring, Warm Temps Prompt Tick Sightings

With the mild winter weather and more outdoor activity recently, residents should be aware that ticks are out. The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center has recently been asked to identify ticks – one being a deer tick - found on pets. Often during outdoor activities like hiking and picnicking, ticks can attach themselves to clothing or skin and ride home with people or pets. By following a few simple guidelines, you can avoid unwelcome hitchhikers and still enjoy the beautiful outdoors.

There are two known species of ticks in Lake County, the American dog tick (sometimes called the wood tick) and the deer tick (sometimes called the black-legged tick). Dog ticks are one-quarter-inch long as adults, much smaller as juveniles, and are dark reddish brown with irregular silvery or cream-colored patterns on their back. Dog ticks do not carry Lyme disease. This species is the most common tick found throughout Illinois. Deer ticks are much smaller, about one-eighth-inch as adults. They are dark brown to bright red, have black legs, and have been rarely found in Lake County but their population appears to be increasing. Deer ticks can carry Lyme disease.

Recent studies by the Lake County Health Department and the University of Illinois showed that approximately 37 percent of the ticks in this region tested positive for the presence of the pathogen that causes Lyme disease.

"We know there are deer ticks in Lake County that carry Lyme disease - keep this in mind as you're spending time outdoors this spring," said Irene Pierce, the Health Department's Executive Director. "Protecting your family and pets from tick exposure is easy, we just need to remember to do it."

The Health Department is urging residents to protect themselves from exposure to ticks by following the guidelines below.

Tips for reducing tick habitat around your home:

- Clear leaf litter under trees, and keep the ground clean under bird feeders.
- Keep grass near playground equipment short.
- Install a wood chip or gravel barrier between lawns and wooded and tall grass areas.
- Minimize wood piles as these are attractive to small mammals such as mice, which can carry ticks.

Tips for reducing exposure to ticks:

- Avoid tick habitat by staying on trails when in forest preserves and parks.
- Wear light-colored, protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Tuck trouser cuffs in socks and tuck in shirt tails.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET primarily to clothes.
- Apply sparingly to exposed skin. Do not apply repellent directly to the face. Be sure to wash treated skin after coming indoors. Use repellents containing permethrin to treat clothes (especially pants, socks and shoes), but not skin.
- Always follow label directions and supervise children in the use of repellents.
- Walk in the center of trails so plants do not brush against you.

- Check yourself, your children and other family members every two to three hours for ticks.
- If your pets spend time outdoors, regularly check them for ticks, too.
- Prompt removal of ticks helps to prevent infection.

To find and remove ticks:

- Check the skin and clothing of anyone that has been in grassy areas for an extended period.
- Pay extra attention to the neck, behind the ears and the groin.
- Use fine-tipped tweezers or shield your fingers with a tissue when removing a tick.
- Do not burn the tick with a match or cover it with petroleum jelly.
- Grasp the tick close to the skin surface and pull upward with slow, even pressure.
- Do not twist or pull the tick quickly; this causes the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin.
- Do not squeeze the tick's body.
- Once the tick is removed, disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.
- Make a note of the date you removed the tick and save it for identification in case you become ill. Place the tick in a plastic bag and put it in your freezer.

In order to transmit illness, a deer tick must be attached to the skin for at least 24-hours.

Symptoms of Lyme disease may include "bull's-eye" rashes or lesions around the site of the bite (generally seven to 14 days after the tick has consumed a blood meal),

accompanied by fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and/or joint aches. If you

experience any of the signs or symptoms seven days or more following a known tick bite,

you should consult your physician. For more information about ticks and how to identify

them, visit: [http://lakecountyil.gov/Health/resources/Documents/ticks\[1\].pdf](http://lakecountyil.gov/Health/resources/Documents/ticks[1].pdf) or call: (847) 377-

8002.