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Tick Tock!

With warmer weather on its way, Lyme Disease Awareness Month is here again! Health care providers reported a record number of Lyme disease cases in 2019 (2,079 cases as of January 15, 2020). The 2020 Lyme Disease Awareness Month theme this May is “Tick Tock.” This reminds us to slow down and practice great tick prevention when spending time outdoors.

The easiest way to avoid tickborne diseases is prevention. This May, please remember to:

- 1) Use caution in areas where ticks may be found
- 2) Wear light-colored clothing that covers arms and legs
- 3) Use an EPA approved repellent such as: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and oil of lemon eucalyptus
- 4) Perform tick checks on yourself and pets daily and after any outdoor activity. Take a shower after exposure to a tick habitat. This is a great opportunity to do a tick check and may wash off any unattached ticks.

The Lyme disease bacterium is passed through the bite of an infected deer tick. For transmission to occur, the deer tick must be attached for 24-48 hours. Find and remove ticks early with frequent tick checks.

In Maine, adults over the age of 65 years and children between the ages of 5 and 15 years are at high risk of Lyme disease. People that work or play outside are also at high risk of encountering infected ticks.

If you are bitten by a tick or spend a lot of time outdoors, make sure to watch for symptoms for up to 30 days after exposure. Also be sure to call your health care provider if symptoms develop. The most common symptom of Lyme disease is a skin rash. This is better known as the “bull’s-eye” rash. The rash usually appears 3-30 days after the tick bite and can show up at the bite site or anywhere else on the body. Other symptoms include fever, headache, and joint or muscle pain. Lyme disease is treatable, and most people recover fully.

Lyme disease is not the only disease that deer ticks in Maine can carry. Anaplasmosis, babesiosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, and Powassan are other tickborne infections found in Maine. The number of reported human cases of all four increased in 2019, and all remain a public health concern.

The deer tick is the only species of tick in Maine that can pass the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Still, there are several other species of ticks found across the state. Tick identification is important, especially when removing ticks. There are tick identification resources available to order at the Maine CDC website. Tick identification and testing services are available through the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab.

Resources:

- Maine CDC has Lyme disease information available on our website at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme>
- Lyme disease data are available through the Maine Tracking Network at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme> under EPI Information on the left-hand side of the page.
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab submission instructions can be found at <http://extension.umaine.edu/ticks/>
- For additional questions, please call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 or email disease.reporting@maine.gov
- Tickborne videos can be found on our website <http://www.maine.gov/idepi> under Videos on the left-hand side of the page.
- Tick identification resources and other materials are available to order at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/order>.