



Lake County
Health Department and
Community Health Center

For Immediate Release

Date: April 14, 2008
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County Officials Urge Public to Watch Out for Ticks

Warm temperatures this spring are bringing people outside just in time for the annual tick season in Lake County. 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, but may carry other diseases. 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 are rare in Lake County. Deer ticks can carry Lyme disease.

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Last year, the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center, in conjunction with the Lake County Forest Preserves and Dr. Jeff Nelson of North Park University in Chicago, conducted a series of tick surveys throughout the county. The surveys confirmed the presence of deer ticks in the area. Also last year, the ticks found through the survey were tested for the presence of Lyme disease. Test results showed that 40 of 107 (37 percent) tested positive for the presence of the pathogen.

“Now that we know that deer ticks in Lake County are carrying Lyme disease, it is even more important to take steps to avoid them,” said Dale Galassie, the Health Department’s Executive Director. “We need to keep this in mind as we enjoy the outdoors this spring.”

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 include:

- 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, 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.

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 the Lake County Health Department's Web site at:

www.co.lake.il.us/health/chs/disease/cdc.asp or call: (847) 377-8002.

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