

St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

www.smchd.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEER TICKS THREATEN IN LATE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER

Lyme disease can cause serious health problems if undetected.

LEONARDTOWN, MD (May 13, 2008) – May through July is prime tick season in Southern Maryland, bringing with it the threat of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. To protect themselves from these diseases, residents are urged to take precautions and learn what to do if a tick bites.

According to St. Mary's County Health Department, 74 cases of Lyme disease were reported in the county between 2000 – 2006. Compared to other state populations, Marylanders are considered to be at medium risk for the disease. Those who spend time outdoors either for work or recreation are at greater risk of infection.

Lyme disease is preventable. Learning the risks, avoiding ticks, and knowing what to do if a tick bites, are measures that prevent the likelihood of the long term problems caused by Lyme disease. As a final line of defense, oral antibiotics that are administered within 7 days of the first

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symptoms, will usually prevent chronic health problems caused by the bacterial infection.

Learning the risks

Deer tick nymphs, the size of poppy seeds are responsible for spreading Lyme disease.

Nymphs are most active in the late Spring and Summer. Tick bites lead to the tell-tale bulls eye rash in 85 – 90 percent of reported infections, but other symptoms are also serious indicators of a problem. Rash and/or flu like symptoms usually occur within one month of the tick exposure.

Nervous symptom disruptions, arthritis-like pain, partial paralysis, and vision problems are also manifestations of the disease. If left untreated, neurological problems, chronic arthritis, and cardiac abnormalities may remain for life.

The most important step to take is to call your doctor if you think you have been bitten, or have any of these symptoms and may have been exposed to deer ticks. A blood test can verify if the symptoms are caused by Lyme disease. Timely antibiotic treatment will successfully treat the infection.

Avoiding ticks

Stay clear of woods and tall grassy areas heavily infested with ticks. If you can't avoid these areas,

- use tick repellent according to the directions on the product label. Children should use tick repellent with a maximum of 30% DEET; the repellent should be sprayed on their skin and clothes.
- wear light-colored clothes to help spot ticks.

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- wear protective clothing (long pants and long-sleeved shirts, tuck pant legs into socks, and tuck shirt into pants).
- wear protective shoes (no open toes).
- Check frequently for tick attachment, especially areas where clothing meets the skin, such as the waistline.

At the end of the day, thoroughly check entire body (head to toe) on yourself and your children for attached ticks; if outside with pets be sure to check them for ticks too.

If a tick bites

It is very important to remove ticks properly. **(See attachment.)** Mark your calendar on the date when a tick is taken off your body. This information will be useful to your doctor.

For more information about Lyme disease, visit >www.MarylandtickOff.org<.

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