



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summer Weather Brings Ticks . . .and Tick-borne Diseases *DHMH reminds Marylanders to take precautions against tick bites*

BALTIMORE, MD (June 15, 2007) – Summer time is here, with lots of outdoor activities, warm evenings, and ... ticks! The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) reminds Maryland residents to avoid tick exposures to prevent serious tick-borne infections. Potentially serious illnesses such as Lyme disease can be spread by tick bites.

Confirmed Lyme disease cases in Maryland increased by about one percent in 2006 from 2005, according to DHMH. This is an increase consistent with the growth in the state's population. In 2006, there were 1,248 confirmed cases of Lyme disease compared to 1,235 confirmed cases in 2005.

"Marylanders are at risk for Lyme disease," said Dr. Michelle A. Gourdine, DHMH deputy secretary for Public Health Services. "Currently, there is no human vaccine available to prevent Lyme disease or other common tick-borne infections. "People should minimize tick exposure, avoid tick bites, and protect their pets from tick bites, too."

Public health officials believe that better recognition of Lyme disease signs and symptoms by healthcare providers and members of the public has contributed to the rise in reported cases.

"Working together, local health departments and DHMH are continuing to monitor this infection in our state," said Dr. Gourdine. "Public awareness and provider education about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases are essential to Maryland's plans to prevent and control these diseases".

Several steps can reduce the risk of getting Lyme disease from a tick bite:

- Clothing choices can keep ticks from biting you and your family members. Examples of protective attire include lightweight, light-colored clothing with long sleeves and long pants. Make sure pants legs are tucked into socks and shirts are tucked into pants.
- Use of tick repellants may also be considered. While some tick repellants are available over the counter, please read instructions carefully before applying to people of any age, and especially before applying to children.

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Tick Season, page two

- A check of your body for ticks is an easy way to further reduce the risk of infection. Look at your skin for ticks after spending time outdoors, particularly in wooded, tall grass or brush areas. Also, be sure to check your children and pets every day after they spend time outdoors.
- A biting tick can transmit organisms of Lyme disease and other serious diseases if attached for sufficient time, so remove any crawling or attached tick on the skin promptly, before it has a chance to attach or to feed. Instructions for safe tick removal are at http://www.edcp.org/vet_med/ld_prevent.html#remove.

Further information about Lyme disease, such as how to recognize its early signs or symptoms, can be obtained from your healthcare provider, your local health department or by clicking on 'Fact Sheets', then 'Lyme Disease' at www.edcp.org. Additional information is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov.

Public and provider education is one of several recommendations for Lyme prevention and control. These recommendations were developed after discussions among representatives of local health departments, DHMH and partner agencies in State government, insurance companies, medical experts, and Lyme disease prevention groups. The recommendations are available on the Internet at www.edcp.org/vet_med/pdf/Recommendations_LD_Plan07.pdf.

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