

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
Friday, June 14, 2013

### First Positive Tick for Lyme Disease in 2013

RECEIVED JUN 26 2013

**Windsor-Essex County** – The first tick collected this year in Windsor-Essex has tested positive for Lyme disease. The tick was sent to the Public Health Lab in London, where it was identified as a blacklegged tick. Further analysis at the National Microbiological Laboratory in Winnipeg confirmed that it was a carrier of *Borrelia burgdorferi* or Lyme disease.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit received the tick after it was found on an individual who attended Point Pelee National Park in April. This is a wake-up call for the residents of Windsor and Essex County to take appropriate precautions when venturing into wooded or grassy areas.

Dr. G. Allen Heimann, Medical Officer of Health for Windsor-Essex County warns everyone to protect themselves from tick bites by:

- Not walking in tall grass.
- Staying in centre of path when hiking.
- Changing clothes and showering when coming in from outside. Showering will help wash off ticks that have not yet attached to you.
- Doing a full-body check when coming in from outside.
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants that are light in colour. Pants should be tucked into your shoes or socks.
- Wearing closed-toed shoes.
- Checking pets after coming indoors.
- Using repellents that contain 20% or more DEET on exposed skin (read instruction label first).
- Using Permethrin-containing products should be used on clothing (read instruction label first).
- Making sure your yard is clear of debris, overgrown vegetation, the grass is cut short, and bushes and trees are trimmed.
- Keeping wood piles and bird feeders away from the house.
- Not letting your pets roam through the woods.
- Creating a three metre boarder of gravel, mulch, or wood chips around your lawn.

For more information about the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease and what to do if you're bitten by a tick, download the [Health Unit's information page on ticks](#).

#### Media Contact:

Dr. G. Allen Heimann  
Medical Officer of Health  
Phone: 519-258-2146 ext. 1402  
[aheimann@wehealthunit.org](mailto:aheimann@wehealthunit.org)



## WHAT IS... a Tick?

Ticks are a relative to the spider and are a crawling, non-flying insect that feed on blood. Ticks vary in size and colour; however, the blacklegged deer tick is involved in the spread of Lyme disease. Adult females are about 3 to 5mm long before feeding and in the youth stages are a great deal smaller and lighter in colour. With the exception of the adult males, the ticks get larger and change colour when feeding. Ticks pass through three life stages – larva, nymph, and adult. Nymph ticks are most likely to spread Lyme disease because this stage is common during summer months and because of their small size they are difficult to feel or detect until engorged (body size expands due to blood meal).

# TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

## What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Lyme disease occurs in the following three stages.

### Early Localized (Stage 1)

- Beginning stage – infection isn't spread throughout the body yet.
- Symptoms show days to weeks after bite.
- A bull's eye rash in 80% of cases.
- Chills.
- Fever.
- Itching.
- Fatigue
- Muscle and joint pain.
- Stiff neck and headache.

### Early Disseminated (Stage 2)

- Infection has started to spread within the body.
- Symptoms may begin to show weeks to months after the bite.
- Face muscle weakness or paralysis.
- Muscle pain.
- Multiple skin rashes.
- Fatigue and weakness.
- Swelling and pain in the joints (arthritic pain).
- Heart problems; often palpitations.

### Late Disseminated (Stage 3)

- Infection has spread throughout the entire body.
- Symptoms may show months to years after the bite.
- Muscle and joint pain is common. (reoccurring arthritis)
- Neurological issues.
- Abnormal muscle movement.
- Numbness and tingling.
- Speech issues.

## How is Lyme disease Spread?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection spread through the bite of a blacklegged deer tick. Ticks often attach by standing on the ends of plants and gripping onto the person when she or he brushes by. The tick then bites the person to take a bloodmeal. The bite of a tick is often painless. The bacteria travel from the stomach of the tick to the tick's saliva. This takes several hours so you're more likely to contract Lyme disease if the tick has been attached for more than 24 hours. Lyme disease is not contagious; however, ticks may travel on pets into the home and latch onto other hosts.

## What do I do if I've been bitten?

It's important to remove the tick as soon as possible. Often the tick needs to be attached for longer than 24 hours to allow for infection to happen.

- Using a pair of pointed tweezers, grasp the tick close to the skin.
- Pull the tick gently outwards and don't twist (so that mouthparts are not left behind). If it's not a clean break, attempt to remove mouthparts.
- AVOID squeezing, smothering, burning, or any other technique to remove the tick. This may result in the bacteria being pushed or regurgitated from the tick into the person.
- Gently wash the bite site and use a disinfectant.
- Don't dispose of the tick. Save the tick in a container with a piece of damp paper towel for testing.
- Contact your physician and the Health Unit.

## How do I know if I have Lyme disease?

The tick is assessed at the Ontario Public Health Lab to determine tick type. If the tick is determined to be a blacklegged deer tick further testing is done to detect if the tick is infected with Lyme disease. Upon referral from your physician, testing of the individual may be done. A blood sample is drawn and sent to the public health lab to detect the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Results are produced within 7 days if "non-reactive" and 14 days if "reactive".

The detection of Lyme disease isn't only based on lab results but also takes into consideration symptoms, tick type, and exposure background, as well as the results of the blood test. The results, whether positive or negative, are reported to your health care provider and positive results are reported to the Health Unit.

## How can I prevent getting bit by a tick?

- Avoid walking in tall grass.
- Stick to the centre of the path when hiking.
- Change clothes and shower when coming in from outside. Showering will help wash off ticks that have not yet attached to you.
- Do a full body check when coming in from outside.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants that are light in colour. Pants should be tucked into your shoes.
- Wear closed toe shoes.
- Check pets after coming indoors.
- Use repellents that contain 20% or more DEET on exposed skin (read instruction label first).
- Permethrin-containing products should be used on clothing (read instruction label first).
- Your yard should:
  - Have grass that's cut short.
  - Be free from vegetation debris (e.g., removal of brush and leaf piles).
  - Have play equipment that is kept away from edges of lawn.
  - Have barriers that will keep wildlife out.
  - Be clear of unused items that may provide a hiding place for ticks.
- Keep woodpiles and bird feeders away from the house.
- Avoid letting your pets roam throughout the woods.
- Keep hedges and trees trimmed so that more light enters (ticks prefer darker conditions).
- Establish a 3 m border around the lawn made of gravel, mulch, or woodchips.



WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY  
HEALTH UNIT

TICKS AND  
LYME DISEASE

## What is the Health Unit's role?

Our role at the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit is to provide you with information and to send your tick away to the public health lab for testing. Results are sent back to the Health Unit and may take up to two weeks to receive. An inspector then contacts the patient and notifies them of the results. Information is provided regarding the type of tick and what illnesses it may cause. The patient will also be told to contact their family doctor.

For more information.

**Windsor-Essex County Health Unit**  
Health Inspection Department  
519-258-2146 ext. 1474

### References:

- PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada). (2010). *Lyme Disease Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi-lyme-fs-eng.php>.
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. (2011). *Lyme Disease*. Retrieved from: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/disease/lyme.aspx>.
- CDC (Centre for Disease Control). (2011). *Avoiding Ticks*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/index.html>.
- CDC. (2011). *Tick Removal*. Retrieved from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing\\_a\\_tick.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html).
- A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia. (2011). *Lyme Disease*. Retrieved from PubMed Health database at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH00022961>.