

# Public Health Madison and Dane County: Deer Ticks Abundant in Dane County, Cause More Than Lyme Disease

Posted on Wednesday, May 3, 2017

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Madison WI – May 3, 2017 – Spring is the beginning of peak tick season, and with our recent warm weather, they've gotten an early start. In the past few years, we have seen numbers of deer ticks in our area increase significantly. They transmit Lyme disease, but also other diseases, which are becoming more common.

According to Amanda Kita-Yarbro, Communicable Disease Epidemiologist for Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC), "A bite from an infected deer tick can lead to Lyme disease, which gets the most attention, but also other diseases, like anaplasmosis. PHMDC has seen Lyme disease cases increase over the past 3 years, with an average of 106 cases per year, and additionally sees about 10-15 cases of anaplasmosis each year."

Early symptoms of Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases like anaplasmosis include fever, rash, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes. They can occur anywhere from 3 to 30 days after a bite. If you have any of these symptoms and have been spending time outdoors, talk to your healthcare provider. When treated with antibiotics in the early stages of symptoms, recovery is usually rapid and complete.

For Lyme disease that is left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system. Anaplasmosis, even in healthy people, can be serious and sometimes fatal if the correct treatment is not chosen.

“We’ve all been educated that a tick bite results in a bullseye rash, but not everyone gets that kind of rash, and sometimes don’t even see a tick on their body. This can make diagnosis hard at times. In addition to watching for bullseye rashes, people can look for round or oval rashes that gradually expand, reaching up to 12 inches or more,” says Kita-Yarbro.

Preventing tick bites is the best defense from getting a tickborne disease.

- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass, and walk in the center of trails when hiking.
- Use repellents containing 20-30% DEET on both exposed skin and clothing, carefully following product instructions.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing, carefully following product instructions.
- For those looking for alternative repellents and pesticides, check CDC’s website on natural tick repellents and pesticides  
<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/natural-repellents.html>
- Shower or bathe as soon as possible after coming indoors.
- Tumble clothing you’ve worn on high heat in a dryer, to kill any ticks on clothing.

People may think of doing tick checks only after coming in from hikes or being in the woods, but due to the increase in ticks in our area they should now make tick checks part of their daily routine, even if they’ve been in urban areas or their own backyards. They should do a full-body tick check using a mirror before showering or bathing after they’ve been outdoors. Remember that ticks can be as small as a poppy seed or sesame seed. It’s important that ticks be removed completely, and as soon as possible.

Dogs are very susceptible to tick bites and the diseases they cause. Prevention is the best defense for them as well. Tick preventive products should be used on dogs regularly and tick checks should be done daily. If a tick comes into the house on a dog it could attach to another pet or person living in the house.

For information about ticks from UW Madison Entomology see  
<http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/wisconsin-ticks/>

Information about ticks from CDC see <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>

For more information about tickborne diseases in dogs see

[http://www.petmd.com/dog/conditions/infectious-parasitic/c\\_dg\\_lyme\\_disease](http://www.petmd.com/dog/conditions/infectious-parasitic/c_dg_lyme_disease)