



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Department Reminds Public to Protect from Ticks, Avoid Lyme Disease

PITTSBURGH – Dr. Karen Murphy, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, joined Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker today to highlight the need for residents to protect themselves from ticks, and better understand the threat of Lyme disease. Since 2009, reports of Lyme disease in Allegheny County have increased substantially, resulting in a renewed effort to educate the public.

“Lyme Disease is both preventable and treatable,” said Dr. Karen Hacker. “With education, residents can be more aware of ticks, and use common strategies to protect themselves and their families. We’re very grateful that Secretary Murphy has joined us in this call for the public to educate itself.”

Lyme disease is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick commonly known as the deer tick or blacklegged tick. In 2013, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection tested a small sample of deer ticks from Allegheny County for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. The study found that 34% of the ticks were infected. In 2014, the Health Department recorded 822 cases of Lyme disease. Today, every county in Pennsylvania has deer ticks and is reporting cases of Lyme Disease.

“It is important for Pennsylvanians to know that Lyme disease is present in every county in Pennsylvania,” said Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy. “The prevalence of this illness serves as a reminder for people to better protect themselves from tick bites and to know the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease. For those with the disease it is important to seek early treatment to avoid any potential long-term health complications.”

Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. Some people may remain untreated because early symptoms can be mild and flu-like, and do not always include a telltale “bull’s-eye rash” that can appear three to 30 days after the bite. If untreated, Lyme Disease can lead to serious complications such as chronic arthritis and neurologic problems. An individual who believes he or she has been bitten by a tick, should contact his or her health care provider. Additionally, physicians should consider Lyme Disease in patients with related symptoms.

Health officials urge these precautions to protect yourself and your family from tick-borne diseases:

- If outside in wooded, bushy or grassy areas, avoid brush and wear long pants, long sleeves and long socks to keep ticks off your skin. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirts into pants to keep ticks on the outside of your clothing.
- Wear light-colored clothes to spot ticks more easily.
- Use insect-repellent with 20% to 30% DEET on bare skin (not on face, and not on hands of young

children). Follow instructions carefully, especially with children. For added protection, spray a second repellent containing Permethrin on boots, clothing, and camping gear. Don't use Permethrin on bare skin.

- Remove ticks from your clothing before going indoors. To kill any you may have missed, wash your clothes in hot water and dry them on high heat.
- Shower with a wash cloth within two (2) hours of coming indoors to wash off ticks.
- Check your skin for ticks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully and remove ticks immediately using a fine-tipped tweezers to grasp tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull straight up with steady pressure without twisting. Thoroughly clean bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. If you remove a tick within 24 hours, your chance of getting Lyme disease is extremely small.
- Monitor your health closely after a tick bite and be alert for any signs or symptoms of Lyme disease, which include a bull's eye rash or flu-like symptoms (fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes). Seek medical care if you develop symptoms.
- Many people who develop Lyme disease do not realize they have been bitten, so do not hesitate to seek care if you have symptoms of Lyme disease even if you are not aware of a tick bite.
- Follow same guidelines above for children.
- Examine household pets for ticks and remove them. Dogs also get Lyme disease. Vaccination and tick protection is recommended for dogs.
- Consider using a single springtime application of a tick pesticide if you have ticks on your property. Follow the label instructions carefully.

Two other diseases similar to Lyme disease transmitted by deer ticks are also known to occur in Pennsylvania – babesiosis and anaplasmosis – but, at present, are much less common than Lyme disease.

For additional information about tick control and tick-borne disease prevention, please visit www.achd.net or call the Allegheny County Health Department at **412-687-ACHD**.

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