



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

ALWAYS INSPIRING

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

**Contact:** Melissa Wade  
Public Health Information Officer  
412-578-8312 (office)  
412-339-7995 (cell)  
[melissa.wade@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:melissa.wade@alleghenycounty.us)

### Health Department Issues Tips for Preventing Lyme Disease *Cases Continue to Rise in Allegheny County*

**PITTSBURGH** – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) urges people to dress appropriately and use repellent when in grassy or wooded areas. Individuals should also shower and check for ticks after being outside as ticks that carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease are prevalent throughout the County.

Over the past 10 years, the number of Lyme disease reports has increased dramatically in Allegheny County. An estimated 1,285 cases were reported in 2016, compared with 971 in 2015 and 822 in 2014.

“Lyme Disease is both preventable and treatable,” said Dr. Karen Hacker, Director of the Allegheny County Health Department. “With education, residents can be more aware of ticks, and use common strategies to protect themselves and their families. It is important to know the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease, and for those with the disease, to seek early treatment to avoid any potential long-term health complications.”

Lyme disease is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick commonly known as the deer tick or blacklegged tick. Every county in Pennsylvania has deer ticks and is reporting cases of Lyme Disease.

Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. Some people may remain untreated because early symptoms can be mild 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 had a tick attached for more than 24 hours or has symptoms of Lyme disease should contact his or her health care provider.

ACHD urges 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 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.
- Reduce the habitat for mice around the house and yard. Cut back grass, trim bushes and store everything up off the ground. Fewer mice and other wildlife will reduce the number of infected ticks around the home.
- 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](http://www.achd.net) or call the Allegheny County Health Department at **412-687-ACHD**.

# # #

Karen Hacker, MD, MPH, Director  
**Allegheny County Health Department – Public Information Office**  
542 Fourth Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Phone: 412-687-ACHD (2243) | Fax: 412-578-8325  
[www.achd.net](http://www.achd.net)

---

**Follow us:** [allegheny alerts](#) | [facebook](#) | [google+](#) | [instagram](#) | [linkedin](#) | [pinterest](#) | [twitter](#) | [youtube](#)