

# PERSONAL

## PROTECTION:

### LYME DISEASE



A message from the Town of Greenwich Department of Health

#### **A Growing Public Health Threat**

Lyme Disease is transmitted to humans and pets by a bite of the tiny deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). Deer ticks become infected during the larva and nymph phases by feeding on small mammals and birds, which harbor the Lyme bacterium. Later in their development, the infected nymphs and adults transfer the Lyme bacteria to animals during feeding. The rising number of deer and other small wildlife in suburban areas is linked to increasing numbers of ticks and Lyme disease cases.

#### **PERSONAL PREVENTION OF LYME DISEASE**

There are six basic strategies to prevent personal tick exposure and Lyme disease.

##### **1. Know where ticks live and avoid these habitats.**

Deer ticks can dry out when exposed to direct sunlight for extended periods of time. This forces the ticks to live in shaded, sheltered areas. Avoid the following areas from April to October.

- Edges of yards, woods, roads, and trails
- Leaf litter and shaded gardens
- Weeds, tall grass, shrubs, and low trees
- Under decks and along foundations
- Ornamental ground cover-Pachysandra
- Piled wood and stone walls

##### **2. When entering tick habitats on a regular basis, please consult your doctor about the Lyme disease vaccine.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at publication, recommends that people who have frequent or prolonged exposure to tick habitats, or previous uncomplicated Lyme disease, should consider the Lyme disease vaccine. Please consult your doctor concerning dose schedules.

### 3. Dress properly when entering areas, which may be tick habitats.

- Wear long pants that are a light color to easily spot ticks.
- Tuck pant legs into socks and shirt into pants. Tape pant legs and wear long sleeved shirts when working near the ground.
- Cover hair with a hat and contain long hair, especially while gardening.

### 4. After leaving ANY suspect tick habitat conduct tick checks and launder clothing (especially children's).

- Conduct daily inspections of the whole body, including hairline, waist, under-arms, groin, and back of knees.
- Remove ticks promptly. Use thin-tipped tweezers or forceps and grasp where mouthparts enter the skin. Pull upward in a slow, steady motion. Do not squeeze tick or use other methods of removal. Clean bite area with an antiseptic or soap and water.



### CORRECT TICK REMOVAL

- Remove and check clothing for ticks. Place clothing in a dryer, on high, for 20 minutes to kill unseen ticks.
- Be alert for early symptoms of Lyme disease: a large expanding rash or flu-like symptoms. Seek medical attention.

### 5. Use DEET insect repellents and registered Permethrin products to further reduce tick exposure.

DEET (diethyl-meta-toluamide) and Permethrin are state registered pesticides that the EPA and CDC have found effective as personal tick repellents, when used according to their labels.

- Check product labels for EPA registration numbers. Read the entire label, and apply according to time, conditions, purpose, and amount listed.
- Adults: Use DEET in concentrations of 30-40% on clothing or exposed skin, but never use under clothing.
- Do not use DEET on children's skin as a tick control. Concentrations higher than 10% are unsafe for application to a child's skin, and this level of DEET has a minimal effect on ticks.
- Apply DEET outdoors and avoid application to eyes, nose, mouth, and damaged or irritated skin.
- Wash treated areas after use, especially when repeatedly used in a day or on consecutive days.
- Permethrin products are for clothing applications only. Immediately wash any skin exposed to such products.
- Treat clothing outdoors. Apply a thin layer of Permethrin to the outer surface of pant cuffs, sleeve cuffs, and boots.
- Let clothes dry before wearing. Treatments last 3-4 washings and treated clothing should be laundered separately from untreated clothing.
- If a rash or reaction develops, wash affected area, remove treated clothing, and contact your doctor or poison control center (1-800-343-2722).

**6. Check pets daily for ticks, and use veterinarian recommended tick-control products when pets have daily exposure to ticks.**

- Give pets daily tick checks, especially between toes, ears, around eyes, and skin folds.
- Reduce or eliminate sleeping with pets, because unfed ticks can crawl off pets and become attached to you.
- A Lyme disease vaccine is available for dogs, but not cats, and can be obtained through your local veterinarian.
- Non-organophosphate “spot-ons” (Frontline and Advantage) and insect growth regulators are recommended tick controls for pets. Be sure to consult your veterinarian and carefully follow labels.

**JOIN THE LYME DISEASE EFFORT**

The success of the effort against Lyme Disease depends on the actions of homeowners and concerned residents. The Town of Greenwich Department of Health Laboratory offers a program of tick identification and testing services to the residents of Greenwich and surrounding towns. To learn more about Lyme Disease, please contact the Town of Greenwich Department of Health:

Town Hall 101 Field Point Road Greenwich Ct 06830

The laboratory is on the ground floor.

Phone: 203-622-7843

E-mail: [lab@greenwichct.org](mailto:lab@greenwichct.org)

Website: [www.greenwichct.org](http://www.greenwichct.org)