

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

All residents of New Milford should be aware that Lyme and other tick-borne diseases are common afflictions. Ticks are abundant in our Town and in other wooded and suburban areas throughout the State of Connecticut and the Region. The life cycle of adult ticks is supported by deer, which are also abundant in our area. In addition to Lyme disease, the prevention information in this guide also applies to the other common tick-borne diseases, which include Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis and Babesiosis. These diseases (*with the exception of Ehrlichiosis*) are all transmitted by the bite of an infected black-legged or deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). Ehrlichiosis is primarily transmitted by the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*).

Tick-borne disease can be very serious. For Lyme disease, research studies have shown that an infected tick must be attached to the skin for more than 24 hours to transmit Lyme bacteria. However every tick bite should be monitored closely for 3 – 30 days to look for any signs or symptoms that may develop. Remove ticks immediately using the proper removal method (*see below*).

Reducing exposure to ticks and being aware of the possible affects of tick-borne disease are the keys to prevention. The New Milford Health Department has developed this guide to provide you with some simple yet comprehensive prevention strategies. I urge you to read this brochure and follow the **BLAST** methods to protect yourself and your family.

Sincerely,
Mike Crespan
Director of Health



PROPER TICK REMOVAL:

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick at the place of attachment, as close to the skin as possible.
- Gently pull the tick straight out. Do not twist the tick.
- Place the tick in a small plastic bag for possible testing. Submit to the New Milford Health Department.
- Wash your hands; disinfect the tweezers and the site of the bite.
- Monitor the site and contact your physician.



NEW MILFORD HEALTH DEPARTMENT



TICK-BORNE DISEASE PREVENTION GUIDE

Contains Important Information
for Preventing Lyme and
other Tick-Borne Disease

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/>
<http://www.ct.gov/dph/>
<http://www.ct.gov/caes/>

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USING THE **BLAST** METHOD

- B** Be Aware
- L** Look for Ticks
- A** Avoid Areas with Ticks
- S** Safeguard your Yard and Pets
- T** Get Early Medical Treatment

Tick-Borne Disease Prevention Guide



B encourages you to be aware and beware of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

Everyone should understand that we live in an area where Lyme and other tick-borne diseases are widespread. The good news is that tick-borne disease is preventable. We should be aware of how the disease is transmitted, what to look for, how to minimize contact with ticks and what steps to take if you suspect you have become infected. Education and awareness will greatly improve your ability to prevent tick-borne disease.

L reminds everyone to look for ticks on your skin and clothes every day and remove them properly.

Remove ticks from your clothes before going indoors. To kill ticks that may have been missed, wash your clothes with hot water and dry them using high heat for at least one hour. Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully including your armpits, scalp and groin. Remove ticks immediately using fine-tipped tweezers. If a tick is attached to your skin for less than 24 hours, the chance of becoming infected with Lyme disease is small. You can save ticks in a plastic bag and submit them to the New Milford Health Department for possible testing. Bathing or showering soon after coming indoors from tick-prone areas can also help remove any ticks that may be on your body.

A stands for avoid areas with a lot of ticks.

Ticks prefer wooded and bushy areas with high grass and a lot of leaf litter. These are areas to avoid. Take extra precautions in May, June and July. This is when ticks that transmit Lyme disease are most

active. Also avoid ticks by dressing properly. When possible wear light colored clothing with long pants tucked into socks, wear long sleeved shirts and wear a hat to protect yourself and make it easier to see a crawling tick. If you enter an area with ticks, walk in the center of a trail to avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter.

“**A**” also stands for avoiding ticks by learning about repellents and applying them appropriately. Using a repellent with 20% – 30% DEET on exposed skin and clothing can prevent tick bites. Permethrin is another type of repellent. To keep ticks away, apply 0.5% permethrin-based insecticide to clothing. One application to pants, socks and shoes typically stays effective through several washings.

S stands for safeguard your yard and your pets.

Landscaping techniques can be used to create a tick-safe zone around your home. Ticks that transmit Lyme disease thrive in humid wooded areas. They die quickly in sunny and dry environments. Some simple landscaping techniques to help reduce tick populations include: Remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edges of lawns; place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to restrict ticks from crawling to recreational areas; mow the lawn and clear brush and leaf litter frequently; keep the ground under bird feeders clean; discourage deer from migrating into your yard by using deer-resistant plantings; stack wood neatly and in dry areas; and keep playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees. Also the use of pesticides should be considered. Pesticides designed to kill ticks can be very effective in reducing tick populations. If properly timed, a single application on the perimeter of your yard at the end of May or beginning of June can reduce tick populations by 68 – 100%. Homeowners should consider the benefits of applying pesticide to the perimeter of their yards.

You should also safeguard your pets. Veterinarians offer a variety of methods for protecting animals from

tick-borne disease. Contact with pets can increase your exposure to ticks. Pets can carry ticks into the home on their fur and the ticks may then bite people and infect them. Consult with your veterinarian and safeguard your pets.

T stands for early medical treatment.

In general people who begin medical treatment soon after becoming infected, have a quicker and more complete recovery from Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. Learning to recognize the symptoms and receiving early medical treatment will help to prevent more serious illness. Erythema migrans (EM) is usually the first symptom of Lyme disease. The telltale rash starts as a small red spot at the site of the tick bite and gets larger over a period of days or weeks and forms a red rash shaped like a circle or oval. EM may not appear at all in some people. Other early symptoms can include fever, headache, stiff neck, body aches and tiredness. Although these symptoms may be like those of common viral infections such as the flu, Lyme disease symptoms tend to continue longer or may come and go. After several months of infection with Lyme bacteria, slightly more than half of people not treated with antibiotics develop recurrent attacks of painful and swollen joints. This arthritis can move from one joint to another. The knee is most commonly affected. About 10 to 20 percent of people who have not taken antibiotics will go on to develop chronic (long-lasting) arthritis. Lyme disease can also affect your nervous system, causing symptoms such as stiff neck, severe headache (meningitis), temporary paralysis of the facial muscles (Bell’s palsy), numbness, pain or weakness in the limbs and poor muscle movement. Other more serious long term affects may include memory loss, difficulty with concentration and change in mood or sleep habits. Less commonly, people who have not taken antibiotics may develop heart or other problems weeks, months, or even years after they were infected with Lyme bacteria. Receiving early medical treatment is the key to preventing long term affects.