

NEWS RELEASE

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Health Unit Reports Increase of Lyme Disease in District

NIPISSING & PARRY SOUND, ON – The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit) is advising caution for residents as an increase in Lyme disease has been detected in the district. Between April and July 2021, there have been two confirmed and two probable cases of Lyme disease amongst individuals residing in the Health Unit’s district. Two of these reported cases were likely tick exposures within the district.

Of 84 ticks submitted to the Health Unit for identification and possible testing for Lyme disease so far in 2021, 29 were identified as black-legged ticks, also called deer tick or *Ixodes scapularis*, and four ticks tested positive for the causative bacteria for Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*).

“The increase is unusually high for our district, as it is larger than our five-year average case count in humans,” explains Dr. Carol Zimbalatti, Public Health Physician. “Individuals should always take proper precautions when conducting outdoor activities to avoid tick bites.”

Methods to prevent tick bites include:

- Use bug spray or other insect repellants that contain DEET or Icaridin;
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and tuck your shirt into your pants and your pants into your socks;
- Wear light-coloured clothing to spot ticks more easily;
- Search your clothes and body for ticks at least once a day, paying special attention to areas such as the groin, navel, armpits, scalp, behind ears and knees;
- Don’t forget to tick check children in your care;
- Try to stay on cleared paths when possible, as ticks are more commonly found in wooded areas, or in tall grasses, bushes and shrubs; and
- Take a shower as soon as you can after being outdoors.

How to remove a tick:

If you find a tick on your body, remove it carefully with tweezers. Grasp the tick by the head as close to the skin as possible. If parts of the tick’s mouth break off and remain in the skin, remove them with tweezers. If you can’t remove the mouthparts, leave them alone and let the skin heal. Collect the tick, and make note of where you believe to have encountered it. See your health care provider right away, and when possible, bring the tick to the Health Unit.

For more information on Lyme disease, please visit the Health Unit website at www.myhealthunit.ca/lymedisease or call [1-800-563-2808](tel:1-800-563-2808).

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