News Release

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For Immediate Release
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Daily tick checks

Plattsburgh, April 14, 2021. With increasingly longer days and recent warmer weather, residents are spending more time outdoors. Many residents have reported tick encounters over the past few weeks, and the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is reminding residents to be on the lookout for ticks.

“Lab-confirmed cases of Lyme disease in Clinton County increased significantly over the last year, from 63 in 2019 to 163 in 2020,” stated John Kanoza, Director of Public Health in Clinton County. Lyme disease, an illness caused by a bacteria carried by the deer (blacklegged) tick, is the most common disease spread by ticks in our region. Early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease include: fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes. Approximately 70 to 80 percent of infected persons develop an erythema migrans rash, often with a “bull’s eye” appearance. Left untreated, a range of additional symptoms may develop. For some, symptoms of pain, fatigue, or difficulty thinking persist for more than six months after they finish treatment, known as Post-Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome (PTLDS).

“Your risk of Lyme disease decreases if the tick is removed within 24 to 36 hours of when it attaches, which is why daily tick checks are so important,” noted Mr. Kanoza. CCHD encourages residents to make tick checks part of your daily routine—for everyone in your family, including pets. Mr. Kanoza cautioned, “Pets that spend time outdoors can bring ticks indoors, putting you at risk, even if you haven’t spent time outdoors yourself.” Adult female deer ticks are red and black, while males are just black. Adult deer ticks are about the size of a sesame seed (3 to 4 millimeters [mm]). Young, immature ticks, called nymphs, are tiny—less than 2 mm. They are often no bigger than a pinhead and can be very difficult to see.

Daily tick checks should include key areas ticks like to hide, such as under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and on the hairline and scalp. Taking a shower as soon as possible after spending time outdoors can also help to wash away unattached ticks.

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Other prevention measures include:

- Use an EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)-registered insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or 2-undecanone. Always follow product instructions.
- Cover your skin as much as possible. Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.
- Treat clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Never apply permethrin directly to skin. Re-treat clothing annually according to label instructions.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If the clothes are damp, dry them completely and then dry for 10 minutes on high heat.

“Knowing where to expect ticks is key to avoiding contact with them,” said Mr. Kanoza. “Ticks live in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas, or even on animals. Stay toward the center of the path when hiking, and avoid dense woods and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter when possible. But most importantly—make tick checks part of your daily routine,” Mr. Kanoza emphasized.

For additional information, including tick removal, visit https://www.cdc.gov/lyme.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department’s Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at www.clintonhealth.org or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), Twitter (@ClintonCountyHD), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).