

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
11 State House Station
286 Water Street
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Tick Free ME Leading the Fight Against Tickborne Disease in Maine

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) asks health care providers to partner with us to prevent tickborne diseases through patient education. While ticks can be active any time the temperature is above freezing, most tick activity occurs in the warmer months. Tick bite prevention is key to preventing tickborne diseases. The 2023 Lyme Disease Awareness Month theme, “Tick Free ME,” reminds us to prioritize tick bite prevention every day. This includes:

- 1) Knowing tick habitat and using caution in areas where ticks may live.
- 2) Wearing light-colored clothing that covers arms and legs.
- 3) Using EPA-approved repellents such as: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and oil of lemon eucalyptus on skin. Use permethrin on clothing.
- 4) Performing daily tick checks on ourselves, all family members, and any pets and showering after being in tick habitat.

Health care providers in Maine reported over 2,600 cases of Lyme disease in 2022 (data as of March 7, 2023). Lyme disease is not the only disease that can result from a deer tick bite. Anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Hard Tick Relapsing Fever (HTRF, *Borrelia miyamotoi* disease), and Powassan virus disease are other tickborne infections found in Maine. In 2022, health care providers reported 824 cases of anaplasmosis, 192 cases of babesiosis, 12 cases of HTRF, and four cases of Powassan virus disease (data as of March 8, 2023). The majority of tickborne illnesses occur during the summer and fall months when ticks and people are active outdoors.

Changes to Lyme Disease Surveillance Case Definition:

Effective January 2, 2022, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) modified the Lyme disease surveillance case definition. Under the previous surveillance definition, providers reported all diagnosed *erythema migrans* rashes and all positive lab diagnoses and Maine CDC followed up with health care providers for clinical information. Under the new surveillance case definition, **Maine CDC no longer collects reports of *erythema migrans* rashes or clinical information from health care providers.** As a result, Maine CDC no longer reports confirmed cases of Lyme disease, only probable cases. This is a change in surveillance case definition only and **DOES NOT** reflect a change in Lyme disease diagnosis or treatment recommendations.

Thank you for your invaluable help in the prevention and early identification of tickborne diseases here in Maine.

Important Resources:

- Updated “Tickborne Diseases of the United States: A Reference Manual for Healthcare Providers, Sixth Edition” available at <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/index.html>.
- IDSA treatment guidelines, including Lyme disease, available at www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/alphabetical-guidelines/.
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab submission instructions found at www.ticks.umaine.edu.
- Tickborne disease data available through the Maine Tracking Network at <http://www.maine.gov/lyme> under “Maine Tracking Network: Tickborne Diseases” on the left-hand side of the page.
- Patient education materials available at www.maine.gov/lyme and www.maine.gov/dhhs/order.
- For additional questions, please call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 or email disease.reporting@maine.gov.