

# How to reduce risk for Lyme disease

When the weather warms up and hours of daylight increase, few people can resist the allure of the great outdoors. Nature beckons each spring, and those answering that call must do so safely.

Lyme disease is a potential threat for people who live in certain regions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that Lyme disease cases have been reported in nearly every state, though residents in certain states are more vulnerable than others. For example, CDC data indicates that incidence rates were highest in several states in New England, including Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, while rates in Oklahoma, Missouri and Wyoming were especially low.

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of an infected tick. Playing, hiking, camping, or working in wooded or grassy places where instances of Lyme disease are high increases a person's risk of being bitten. But that doesn't mean those

in areas like New England, the mid-Atlantic or the upper-midwest must avoid such activities. However, they should take steps to prevent tick bites when going out into the great outdoors.

- Recognize where ticks live. The CDC reports that blacklegged ticks cause Lyme disease and that such ticks live in moist and humid environments. In addition, the Lyme Disease Association notes that ticks are most likely to be in certain areas, including woods, areas where woods meet lawns and where lawns meet fields. Ticks also may be living in tall brush/grass, under leaves, under ground cover, near stone walls or wood piles, or in shady areas. Ticks also may be drawn to areas around bird feeders or outdoor areas designated for pets.

- Wear insect repellent. The CDC recommends wearing insect repellents registered with the Environmental Protection Agency. Repellents should contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol,

or 2-undecanone. The EPA even has a tool on its website that can help people choose the right repellent products for them. That tool can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>. The CDC advises people to treat clothing and gear, including socks and tents, with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin, which can remain protective even after several washings. Pre-treated clothing may be protective even longer.

- Check for ticks every day. Ticks can be found anywhere on the body, and the CDC recommends checking for ticks every day. Pay particular attention to underarms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, the back of the knees, in and around all head and body hair, between the legs, and around the waist.

Ticks pose a threat when spending time in the great outdoors. Various preventive measures can help people reduce their risk for Lyme disease.



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