

June 6, 2018

To all parents, professors, childcare givers and school staff

**Subject : Lyme disease – Information**

Hello,

With summer on the horizon, it's time to benefit the most of outdoor activities. Nevertheless, this is to remind you that Lyme disease is quite prevalent in Montérégie.

Lyme disease is transmitted through the bite of an infected tick. The risk of getting bitten is high during spring through the fall. Children and adults performing outdoor activities as hiking, biking, camping or other activities in the forest, in the woods as well as in tall grass areas, are at higher risk to be exposed to ticks.

In order to benefit the most of outdoor physical activity, here are simple measures to protect yourselves and your children from acquiring Lyme disease in tick infested areas:

- Wear long pants if possible, closed footwear and socks.
- Apply a DEET or Icaridine based insect repellent, following the instructions on the product label.
- Shower and change your clothes as soon as you get home.
- Look for ticks on your skin and that of your child. Remove any ticks you find as quickly as possible. The risk of contracting Lyme disease is minimal if the tick is removed within less than 24 hours of exposure.
- Call Info-santé at 8-1-1 if you or your child got bitten by a tick. A medical assessment might be recommended in order to determine whether an antibiotic is needed to prevent the development of Lyme disease.
- Seek medical attention promptly if you develop any symptoms (localized skin redness of 5 cm or more in diameter, fever, headache, tiredness) within 30 days of a tick bite. Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics.

Further information about Lyme disease can be found in the enclosed leaflet. In addition, the Montérégie public health website [www.maladiedelymeMonteregie.com](http://www.maladiedelymeMonteregie.com) provides answers to your frequently asked questions. Where are the high risk areas (map)? How can you protect yourself? What to do if bitten by a tick? What are the symptoms to look for ?

Enjoy your summer and happy end of the school year!

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# LYME DISEASE

## Make sure you don't catch Lyme disease

Lyme disease is caused by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacterium, and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks, also called deer ticks. This tick lives in wooded areas, forests, tall grass, and shrubs. Actual climate change is enabling ticks to settle down in Québec, particularly in Montérégie and Estrie. Lyme disease is also well established in other Canadian provinces, in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

### PREVENTING TICK BITES

**DURING AN OUTDOOR ACTIVITY** in a wooded area or forest:

- Wear clothes that cover the skin: long pants, long-sleeved shirt or sweater, closed boots or shoes, and socks.
- Tuck pants into socks.
- Wear pale-coloured clothes that make it easier to see ticks.
- Prevent bites by applying an insect repellent on clothes and exposed parts of the body, except for the face. DEET-based products at 30% concentration or less or Icaridine based products at 20% concentration are safe and effective against ticks. Follow the instructions on the label. Other active ingredients may be less effective against ticks.
- Stick to cleared trails in wooded areas and forests.

### CHECK FOR TICKS AND REMOVE THEM

**AFTER AN OUTDOOR ACTIVITY** in a wooded or tall grass area :



- Shower or bathe when returning home and change clothes.
- Check your body, your children's bodies, and your pets. For hard-to-reach places (like your back), use a mirror or ask someone to help you. Adult ticks are about as large as a pencil dot, and nymphs are the size of a pin head.
- Remove ticks as soon as possible. The longer the tick's mouth is attached to the skin, the greater the risk for infection. The risk of infection is low within the first 24 hours, but increases after 24 hours.
- Use a very small pair of tweezers (the kind used to remove splinters) to detach the tick from the skin. Grasp the tick's head as close as possible to the skin and pull out slowly and steadily. Pull straight out perpendicular to the skin, and do not twist or rotate the tick.
- Avoid squashing or crushing the tick, as this increases the risk of infection. If a small part of the tick remains in the skin, remove it with the tweezers. It can no longer transmit the bacterium.
- After the tick is removed, wash your hands and the bite site with soap and water.
- If you find a tick attached to the skin, contact Info-Santé by dialling 8-1-1-. A preventive medication may be recommended if the tick bite occurred in certain geographic regions.



## CONSULT A DOCTOR IF SYMPTOMS DEVELOP

Symptoms usually appear within 30 days after a tick bite or after a high-risk activity :

- A non-painful reddening of the skin over an area of 5 cm or more which expands for several days or weeks, then disappears. This redness affects about 80% of infected people.
- Fever
- Muscle or joint pain
- Fatigue

Most people with Lyme disease can be treated effectively with oral antibiotics over a period of two to three weeks. Untreated, the disease can affect the nervous system, heart, and joints.

Lyme disease is diagnosed when the symptoms develop following time spent outdoors in an area where infected ticks are known to live. The doctor may support the diagnosis with the results of laboratory tests.

## WHO IS AT RISK OF CONTRACTING THE DISEASE?

People who live, work, play, or spend time outdoors in wooded areas, forests, or areas with tall grass or bushes where infected ticks live are at greater risk for contracting Lyme disease. Ticks are active from April to December, as long as there is no snow on the ground. The highest-risk period to get bitten ranges from May to September.

Examples of high-risk activities:

- Hiking or biking through a forest
- Cutting wood
- Fishing or hunting
- Camping
- Golfing (off course)
- Gardening next to a wooded area



## HOW TO CREATE TICK-FREE ZONES

- Cut grass, bushes, and branches around playgrounds and recreation areas.
- Remove leaf litter, bushes, and weeds at the edge of the lawn and around wood piles and garden sheds.
- Trim tree branches and shrubs at the edge of the lawn to prevent being in contact with ticks and to let in more sunlight.
- Create a 3 meter or wider barrier between the woods and the lawn with woodchips, mulch, or gravel.
- Put children's play sets and sand boxes on a woodchip or mulch foundation, and place them away from the woods.

If you have questions about your health, contact Info-Santé at **811**

For more information, visit the website at [www.MaladiedeLymeMonteregie.com](http://www.MaladiedeLymeMonteregie.com)