



# AVOID BECOMING THE TARGET

**Make sure you don't catch Lyme disease**

Lyme disease is caused by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* (*Bb*) bacterium, and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. This tick lives in wooded areas, forests, tall grass, and shrubs. Climate changes are creating favourable conditions in Québec for ticks that carry the *Bb* bacterium, particularly in Montérégie and surrounding areas. They have also been established in the United States, Europe, and Asia for many years.

## PREVENTING TICK BITES

**WHEN DOING 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 pant legs 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 are safe and effective against ticks (for example, OFF! Deep Woods<sup>®</sup>, Watkins<sup>®</sup>, Muskol<sup>®</sup>). Follow the instructions on the label.
- Stick to cleared trails in wooded areas and forests.

## CHECK FOR TICKS AND REMOVE THEM

**AFTER BEING OUTDOORS** in a wooded area or forest:



- Shower or bathe when returning home.
- 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.



## CONSULT A DOCTOR IF SYMPTOMS DEVELOP

Symptoms usually appear within 30 days after a tick bite:

- A non-painful reddening of the skin over an area larger than 5 cm begins at the bite site and expands for several days or weeks, then disappears in 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. If left untreated, the infection 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 brush 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 for getting bitten ranges from May to September.

Examples of high-risk activities:

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



## HOW TO CREATE TICK-FREE ZONES

- Cut grass, brush, and branches around playgrounds and recreation areas.
- Remove leaf litter, brush, 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 border 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 by dialing **811**

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