

April Health Happenings

April showers bring May flowers, and along with them, the dreaded tick population we forgot about since last summer! As we all start to spend more time in the warmer weather, we need to be aware of the importance to check ourselves and those around us for ticks. We especially in Marshall County need to be on the lookout as we fall within a region of Indiana with a high rate of Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*) in the blacklegged tick population (*Ixodes scapularis*). These ticks can transmit the disease in both the adult and nymph stages (adult and nymph tick shown in photo). According to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Marshall County has one of the highest rates of nymph and adult blacklegged ticks carrying the Lyme disease bacteria in the state¹. For a map of Indiana's Lyme disease tick infection map, visit www.in.gov/isdh/28130.htm.

Though a heightened risk of the disease exists, there are ways to reduce the risk of exposure. ISDH recommends avoiding tick habitats which requires knowing where to expect ticks³. Areas where ticks are likely to be present (but not limited to) include grassy, brushy, and wooded areas up to two feet off the ground. If you know you will be in an area where tick exposure is possible, one of the best prevention methods is to apply a 0.5% permethrin solution to boots, clothing or camping gear. When used on clothing, the solution remains protective through several washings. Another method of prevention is to wear EPA-registered insect repellent, such as repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. A final protection method is reducing the amount of exposed skin. Wearing pants, hats, long-sleeve shirts, and tall sock are just a few of these methods³.

If you happen to have a tick attached to yourself, your child, your pet, or anyone, it is important to remove the tick properly. Using fine-tipped tweezers or a tick-removal tool, grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible³. Pull upward slowly with even pressure to ensure the entire tick is being pulled off the skin. If the tick's mouth parts become detached, do your best to try and remove them as well. If unable to remove them, leave the skin along and let it heal. Once removed, clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Finally, make sure to not crush the tick with your fingers. Rather, to dispose of it properly, put it in alcohol, in a sealed bag/container, wrap it tightly in tape, or flush it down the toilet³.

Lyme disease is transmitted to a human when the tick attaches to and bites the skin. If this occurs, typical signs and symptoms appear between 3-30 days after the initial bite and include flu-like symptoms including fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes². A rash is common and typically appears as a bulls-eye with a red center and a red ring around it (shown in photo). If you believe you have been exposed to a tick bite and are experiencing any of the symptoms, it is recommended to visit your physician for further examination. Though Lyme disease is treatable, it is important to be diagnosed as early as possible. Upon your doctor's examination and confirmatory testing, antibiotics may be

prescribed but the severity of the condition fully depends on the stage at which the disease was diagnosed.

For further information on Lyme disease in Indiana and Marshall County, visit ISDH's website at <https://www.in.gov/isdh/28011.htm> or you can call in our office at 574-935-8565 during our office hours of 8-4 M-F.

References

1. Indiana State Department of Health. 2019. Lyme disease tick infection map. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/isdh/28130.htm>
2. Indiana State Department of Health. 2019. Lyme disease. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/isdh/28011.htm>
3. Indiana State Department of Health. 2019. Tick bite prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/isdh/20491.htm>

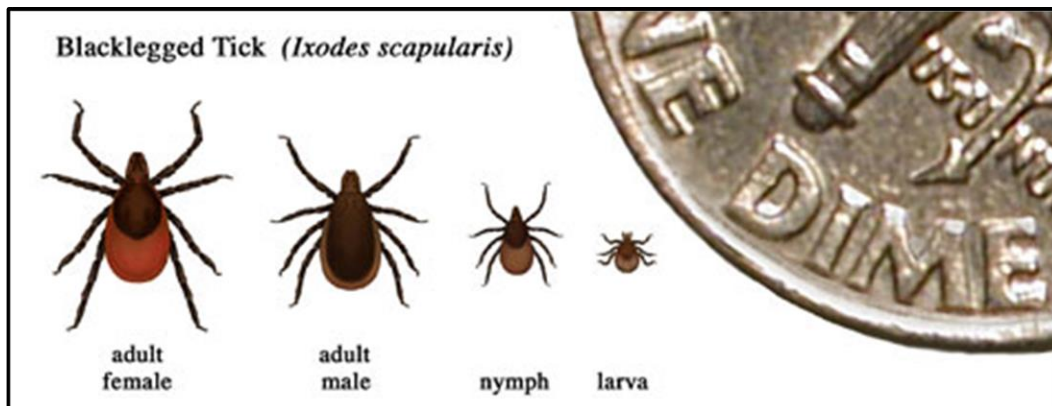


Figure 1 Adult and nymph blacklegged tick (<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/transmission/blacklegged.html>)



Figure 2 Bulls-eye skin rash, common with Lyme disease infection (<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28011.htm>)