

To:  
Area Health Care Providers

April 16, 2024

**RE: Lyme Disease Risk in Porcupine Health Unit (PHU) Region**

Lyme disease is a serious illness caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which can be spread through the bite of blacklegged ticks. Traditionally, these ticks have been found in Southern Ontario, with the risk to residents most commonly related to travel and migratory birds.

**As of 2016, the PHU has confirmed the presence of blacklegged ticks in our area, including ticks that have tested positive for Borrelia burgdorferi. Any person in contact with a tick needs to follow up with a physician.**

The diagnosis of Lyme disease is primarily clinical and supported by a history of tick exposure. The tick needs to be embedded in the skin for approximately 12 – 24 hours for transmission of Lyme disease to occur. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Erythema
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Migraines
- Arthralgias
- Weakness
- Rash
- Fever

Lab tests support diagnosis and treatment, although treatment may be guided by clinical symptoms and exposure. As blacklegged ticks no longer receive pathogenic testing, clinical diagnosis and management is important at the time of suspected presentation. As of April 1, 2023, the Public Health Ontario Lab (PHOL) moved to a different testing algorithm for Lyme disease.

**Please see references below for more information regarding testing, diagnosis, treatment, and tick testing.**

Within the PHU area, the risk remains low for Lyme disease. However, with the presence of these blacklegged ticks, we will continue to monitor the situation and promote preventative measures with members of the public.

- **Should you have a suspected or known case, please contact the PHU.**
- **If a patient brings in a tick that was found on a human; please place it in a specimen bottle and contact the PHU. This will contribute to ongoing tick surveillance for our area.**

Please contact the PHU should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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Manager of Environmental Health  
Porcupine Health Unit

## **Resources**

### **Lyme Disease Information**

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/vector-borne-zoonotic-diseases/lyme-disease>

### **Management of Tick Bites and Investigation of Early Localized Lyme Disease**

<https://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/evidence/qs-lyme-disease-clinical-guidance-2023-en.pdf>

### **Treatment information**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/lyme-disease/health-professionals-lyme-disease.html>

### **Map of Areas with Blacklegged Ticks**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/lyme-disease/surveillance-lyme-disease.html>

### **Lyme Disease – Serology** (English Only)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory-Services/Test-Information-Index/Lyme-Disease-Serology>

### **Lyme Disease – PCR** (English Only)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory-Services/Test-Information-Index/Lyme-Disease-PCR>

### **Arthropods Microscopy** – including ticks (English Only)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Laboratory-Services/Test-Information-Index/Arthropod-Identification>

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