

July 4, 2024

RE: Enjoy the outdoors – and be tick aware!

To the Town of Lunenburg Council and Staff,

Summer and fall in Nova Scotia are wonderful seasons where people spend countless hours outdoors at the many beautiful beaches, trails, parks, and wooded areas across our province. As we take in these natural riches we should also be mindful of the presence of ticks. These small insects – sometimes as small as the period at the end of this sentence – are found across Nova Scotia and can cause tick-borne diseases, including Lyme disease and anaplasmosis.

We ask that you please help us promote tick safety and the prevention of tick-borne diseases, by spreading the word in your communities. **We would appreciate if you could share this letter along with the attached poster to municipal staff, community groups and recreation programs.**

Here are some **steps that people can take to protect themselves**, especially in grassy, wooded, or shrub-covered areas:

- Apply insect repellents containing DEET or Icaridin to exposed skin and clothes. Follow directions on the package carefully. Infants under the age of six months should not use these products. Please visit [Personal Insect repellents - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/insect-repellents.html) for specific instructions.
- Wear light colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants, closed-toed shoes, and tuck shirts into pants and pant legs into socks.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Put playground equipment in sunny, dry places away from wooded areas, yard edges, and trees.
- Check your whole body for ticks when possible (especially armpits, ears, knees, hair, groin) and take a bath or shower within two hours of coming indoors. This makes it easier to find ticks and washes away loose ones.
- Clothing is available that is treated with Permethrin (a chemical repellent) can protect against ticks and mosquitoes for those 16 years of age and older. This clothing is not available for those under 16 years of age in Canada.

What do I do if I find a tick on me/my child?

If you find a tick on your body, remove it as soon as possible to lessen the risks of infection. Here's how to remove them safely:

- Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
- Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Don't jerk, twist or squeeze it.
- Clean and disinfect the site with soap and water, rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.

- Dispose of the tick in a sealed plastic bag and put in the garbage.
- Do NOT burn, squeeze, or coax a tick's mouthparts from your skin using other methods.

eTick.ca is a free service that can identify the type of tick usually within 24 hours. Though Lyme and other tick-borne diseases in Nova Scotia are transmitted by the blacklegged (deer) tick, not all blacklegged ticks carry disease and not all blacklegged ticks have black legs.

Blacklegged ticks that are attached to someone's skin for at least 36-48 hours pose the highest risk of transmitting the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. **One of the earliest and most common symptoms of Lyme disease is a rash that's often shaped like a bull's-eye that occurs on the same site as the bite.** Other symptoms of Lyme disease may include fever, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, headaches and occasionally irregular heartbeat, facial paralysis, weakness, confusion, and seizures. Symptoms of other tick-borne diseases can include those listed above for Lyme disease, as well as abdominal pain, vomiting, and/or jaundice. If you've been exploring outdoors, especially in wooded areas, forests, areas where tall grasses and/or shrubs are present, or have found a tick on your body, and show these symptoms, see a healthcare provider. Symptoms for tick-borne diseases typically appear within a few days to up to five weeks after you have been bitten.

There is no vaccine for tick borne diseases in Canada, however, there are antibiotics for the tick-borne diseases that are known to be in Nova Scotia. If a tick has been attached and there are signs that it has been there for more than 36 hours (the tick is swollen, or you believe it has been attached for at least 36 hours) you may be eligible for antibiotics to prevent Lyme disease. You can visit a pharmacist, or a physician or nurse practitioner, to see if you need antibiotics.

For more information on tick-borne diseases, please visit: <https://novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp>

Thank you again for supporting efforts to make our communities aware of how they can practice tick safety.

Dr. Rim Zayed, M.B.B.Ch, DPH, PhD (Epi), FRCPC, DABPM, ACPM
Regional Medical Officer of Health, Western Zone
Public Health, Nova Scotia Health