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## MEDICAL ADVISORY Lyme Disease

TO: Family Physicians  
Infectious Disease Physicians  
Infection Control Professionals  
Emergency Departments  
Neonatal Intensive Care Units  
St. Joseph's Centre for Ambulatory Health Services, Urgent Care

For Your Information:  
Central West Medical Officers of Health  
Dr. Richard McLean, VP Medical, Hamilton Health Sciences  
Dr. David Higgins, President, St. Joseph's Healthcare  
Dr. Hugh Fuller, Chief of Staff, St. Joseph's Healthcare  
Dr. Peter Fitzgerald, President, McMaster Children's Hospital  
Academy of Medicine

FROM: Susan Harding-Cruz, Manager, Vector Borne Disease Program  
Jordan Walker, Manager, Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Program

DATE: August 6, 2013

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### **Important Information on Tick Removal and Lyme Disease**

Dear Colleagues:

We have noted a recent increase in public concern and awareness about Lyme disease. This advisory provides relevant information on how to remove ticks and what to do if you suspect Lyme disease.

#### **Where can people get Lyme disease?**

- Only black legged ticks can transmit Lyme disease and usually need to be feeding for at least 24 hours before they can transmit *Borrelia burgdorferi*, if infected.
- Hamilton is not an endemic area and acquiring Lyme disease in the Hamilton area is unlikely.
- Areas endemic for Lyme disease in Ontario include: Point Pelee National Park, Rondeau Provincial Park, Turkey Point Provincial Park, Long Point Peninsula and Long Point Provincial Park, Wainfleet Bog area (in Niagara Region), Prince Edward Point and Parts of the Thousand Islands National Park.

### What is the recommended course of testing and treatment?

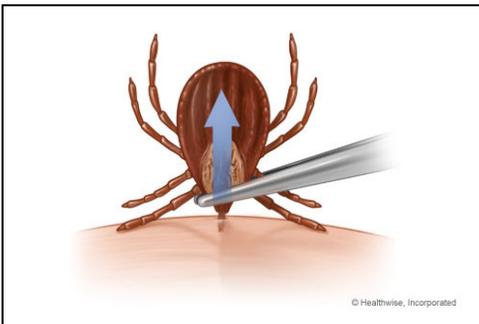
- Laboratory testing should be done when clinical signs and symptoms are present. Clinical signs include erythema migrans (bull's eye rash) in 70-80% of infected individuals, and symptoms include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, fatigue and stiff neck.
- Patients tested during early infection may not have developed antibodies (negative serology) to the bacteria, making detection difficult; therefore, testing patients again in four weeks is recommended.
- With appropriate antibiotics, patients can expect to make a full recovery. If the initial infection is not treated, then infection can become difficult to treat and patients may experience joint, heart and neurological symptoms.
- Treatment guidelines are available online:  
<http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/43/9/1089.full.pdf+html>

### What does Hamilton Public Health Services do?

- Conduct Lyme disease surveillance
- Accept tick submissions from the public and health care facilities for the purposes of identification and surveillance.

### What should you do if a patient has a tick on his/her skin?

Only black legged ticks can transmit Lyme disease and usually need to be feeding for at least 24 hours before they can transmit the bacteria, if they are infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*. For this reason, it is very important to carefully remove the tick to ensure that the insect does not release the bacteria into the bite area.



- Remove the tick immediately using fine-tipped tweezers.
- Do not squeeze the body as it this can accidentally let Lyme disease bacteria into the body.
- Do not put anything on the tick or try to burn it as this may also lead to the tick releasing bacteria into the bite area.
- Clean the bite area with soap and water.

If you wish to have the tick identified, place the tick in a screw top bottle or similar and **call Public Health Services at (905) 546-2489**, Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30.

**Please report confirmed or suspect cases of Lyme disease by calling 905-546-2063 or fax reports to 905-546-4078. Additional inquiries should be directed to Public Health Services, Infectious Disease Program at 905-546-2063, Monday through Friday 8:30 – 4:30. After hours, on holidays and on weekends please call 905-546-2063 and ask to speak to the Infectious Disease Public Health Inspector on call.**