

TOWNSHIP OF WYCKOFF
WYCKOFF BOARD OF HEALTH

For Immediate Release

June 2, 2010

Reported cases of Lyme Disease in Wyckoff have exceeded all previous years. According to Dorothy Voorman-Fish, M.S.,R.N., President of the Wyckoff Township Board of Health, the increase in deer population in the area as well as lack of public awareness is a serious source of concern . She noted that while reporting is required, this regulation is often not adhered to.

David Klopp, V.M.D. Board of Health member, added that the most commonly reported tick disease among humans is also just as significant among animals. A recent study done by a Northern New Jersey lab, confirms the growing number of Lyme cases within the United States. Even though Lyme positive animals have been found throughout the U.S. Bergen County, New Jersey is one of the many areas in East with the highest confirmed cases. Lyme disease can present with different symptoms or none at all in animals. Common signs are limping, swollen lymph nodes, fever, painful joints, lethargy, and loss of appetite. Many area veterinarians include Lyme testing as part of the animals standard wellness checkup. Positive cases at times are seen without presenting symptoms. Risk factors include time spent in grassy or wooded areas, as well as time spent outdoors during Spring and Fall, peak tick seasons. All ticks must be considered hazardous and proper prevention and removal must be conducted. Owners of animals must realize that all are at risk. Application of flea and tick treatments, vaccination, and routine tick checks are a few methods in the prevention of this fast spreading disease.

The Wyckoff Board of Health encourages reviewing the following facts:

FACTS ABOUT LYME DISEASE

WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme Disease is a tick-borne illness that causes arthritis and, in some people, disorders of the heart and central nervous system. It is most common in the Northeast coastal states (from Maine to Maryland) and in the upper Midwest (Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota) and on the Pacific Coast (in California and Oregon). Lyme disease is most often contracted in the late spring and early summer.

WHAT CAUSES LYME DISEASE?

It is caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi*, a spirochete form of bacteria. This disease is transmitted by the bite of a deer tick, an insect about the size of a period. In addition to deer, these ticks are found on birds and many small animals, including field mice and other rodents.

HOW IS LYME DISEASE DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?

Lyme Disease is diagnosed on the basis of blood test and symptoms. It is treated with antibiotics, usually tetracycline or penicillin, which are given orally for 14 to 21 days. Pregnant women and patients with severe cases may require hospitalization and or intravenous antibiotic therapy.

WHAT CAN YOU DO YOURSELF?

If fatigue is severe, the test is necessary. Aspirin or acetaminophen can relieve the flu-like symptoms and joint pain. Avoid excessive use of inflamed or swollen joints; over-use may result in permanent joint damage.

WHEN SHOULD I SEE MY DOCTOR?

If you experience any symptoms, see your doctor as soon as possible. A pregnant woman who thinks she has been bitten by a deer tick should see her doctor even in the absence of symptoms. Treatment is most effective if it is started within a week to ten days after infection.

WHAT WILL THE DOCTOR DO?

Blood tests to detect antibodies against the bacterium that causes Lyme Disease will be ordered. However, because current antibody tests do not always detect Lyme Disease in its early stages, a doctor may begin antibiotic treatment even if the test is negative.

Aspirin or other anti-inflammatory drugs may be prescribed to ease pain and joint symptoms. Extra rest is also advised.

THE COURSE OF LYME DISEASE

The course of the illness varies greatly from one person to another and may be dependent on genetic factors. After a week or two of flu like illness, which may be accompanied by a rash symptoms usually disappear. If the disease is untreated in this early stage, serious complications involving the heart, joints and nervous system may develop weeks or months later. Even so, complications occur in about 15 percent of those patients who undergo early treatment. Because of the diversity of its symptoms, Lyme Disease is often misdiagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis, meningitis, or multiple sclerosis. Fatigue, mood changes and neurological problems are often mistaken for mental illness.

IS LYME DISEASE DANGEROUS?

It is rarely fatal, but heart complications may cause life threatening abnormal heart rhythms, and infection during pregnancy may cause fetal loss. Symptoms may impair the quality of life for months or years.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID LYME DISEASE?

1. Avoid tick exposure in endemic areas
2. Walk along cleared or paved surfaces rather than on grass or in woods.
3. Wear long-sleeved shirts that button at the wrist, long pants tucked into socks, and closed shoes. Choose light-colored fabric so you can spot and brush off ticks.
4. Use insect repellents containing DEET and or permethrin. Follow package instructions.
5. Use flea and tick collars on your pets and brush them carefully after they have been outdoors.
6. If you bitten by a tick, remove the tick immediately by grasping it as close to the skin as possible with tweezers and tugging gently.
7. In areas where deer ticks are common, mow weeds and grass around the house.
8. Try to discourage birds or animals that may harbor the ticks from coming near the house. Bird feeders, for example attract birds as well as rodents and other animals that carry deer ticks.

Contact the Wyckoff Board of Health, 201-891-7000 ext 304, if you have questions or concerns.