

Tompkins County Health Department
Frank Kruppa ? Public Health Director

Lyme Disease on the Increase in Tompkins County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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July 19, 2012 (Ithaca, NY) ? Lyme Disease is on the rise in Tompkins County. The number of cases has steadily increased in the past few years the Tompkins County Health Department reports. Karen Bishop, Community Health Nurse Supervisor noted that in 2006 there were 2 cases; in 2010 there were 70 and 107 in 2011. ?But the actual number of cases exceeds the official count because most cases are not confirmed through a lab test,? she added.

?By May of this year, there were 45 cases in 2012 but we know that there are many more. Local physicians have called the Health Department to report they are regularly seeing patients with symptoms of Lyme Disease ? much more than they have in the past, she said.? Most of the cases have been acquired locally, not from travel to other areas.

Physicians report that people often aren?t aware that they?ve been infected by a tick until symptoms appear. These may include severe fatigue, recurrent flu-like symptoms, joint swelling, facial paralysis or rash. Some people might experience a sudden red, painful, lesion on their body. They should see their provider as soon as possible; Lyme Disease is a possible cause.

Tick-borne diseases are a serious health threat. Lyme disease may affect the skin, nervous system, heart and joints. However, early treatment with antibiotics is effective.

Karen Bishop urged all Tompkins County residents to remember:

- Wear light-colored clothing and tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants when walking in wooded and grassy areas. Gardeners should take these precautions also.
- After every two to three hours outdoors, check for ticks on clothing or skin. Brush off any ticks on clothing before they can attach to your skin.
- Do a thorough check of your body at the end of the day. Pay close attention to the back of the knees, behind the ears, scalp, arm pits and back. Check your children and pets, too.
- If an attached tick is removed within 36 hours, the risk of infection is small. To remove a tick: Use tweezers, grasping the tick near the mouthparts, as close to the skin as possible. Don?t squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick, which may contain infectious fluids.
- If you consider using repellents be sure to follow label directions. Do not allow children to apply repellents themselves. Use only small amounts of repellent on children.

To learn more about Lyme disease, call the Tompkins County Health Department at 274-6604 or visit the Department?s website: www.tompkins-co.org/health to see what a tick looks like and how to remove it.

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