

**CWL ABMK Provincial Council
Education and Health Communique #5
May 2014**

Lyme Disease

The Alberta Mackenzie Provincial CWL passed a resolution titled **Lyme Disease and Co-Infections: Education and Research Funding** in 2013. This resolution was forwarded to the National CWL for consideration at their convention. In turn they sent it to provincial councils asking them to inform their membership. As we are moving into spring and summer it is hoped that the following information will serve you well – a very good time to be receiving the following information. **The greatest challenge for people in our part of the country is that Lyme Disease does not occur frequently and therefore when people go to see the doctor they often dismiss the symptoms as coming from another ailment. It is imperative if you feel your symptoms are related to a tick bite you must insist that they test you and treat you appropriately for if the disease progresses it becomes extremely serious.**

Lyme Disease

What is it?

A bacterial illness spread by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria in tick insect bites.

How is it spread?

- Ticks become infected when they feed on mice, squirrels, birds and other small animals that carry the bacterium
- Ticks spread the bacterium to humans
- Their bite is usually painless
- In Canada two ticks are responsible: western blacklegged tick in BC and the blacklegged tick in other parts

Where do we find them?

- Check out the following website to learn where Lyme Endemic areas are.
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/tickinfo-eng.php#sec-1.11>

How do you spot a tick bite?

- large, "bull's eye" shaped skin rash which is usually a sign of Lyme disease and requires medical attention

How to remove a tick

- Remove with tweezers
- Grasp it near its head or mouth
- Gently pull it out ... do not squeeze or crush-dispose of it
- Apply antiseptic to the bite area

What are the symptoms of Lyme Disease?

Swollen bite mark

- A bite mark – red, swollen and tender – a reddish rash with a red ring around it that resembles a bull's eye

Flu like symptoms

- Mild fever, swollen lymph nodes, achy muscles and joints, headaches and lethargy

Rapid heart beat

- Accelerated heart rate – even at rest

Palsies

- If it gets more serious, it can affect the body's nervous system – uncontrolled spasms or body movements

Meningitis

- Lyme meningitis is bacterial in nature and not fatal but can cause fever, neck stiffness, migraine, eye sensitivities, confusion and seizure

Nerve damage

- If not treated and the bacterium spreads to the nervous system (a few months after infection) patient can suffer severe motor and sensory nerve damage that effects joints, heart, brain and causes severe tremors or seizures

Arthritis

- If left untreated after a month or two, it can result in serious stiffness, inflammation, pain and disease of joints eventually causing chronic arthritis

Facial Paralysis

- Because of the attack on the nervous system, the person can suffer facial muscle paralysis as well as severe swelling, stiffness and pain with the facial muscles where normal movement becomes compromised or lost completely

Lyme Disease Prevention

Long pants and long sleeves a hat and gloves when walking in wooded area

- Tuck pants into socks

Use insect repellents

- A repellent with a 20% or higher concentration of DEET
- Spray clothing with permethrin

Tick-proof your yard

- mow the grass
- make a barrier between lawn and shrubs (e.g. wood chip or gravel path)
- plant garlic, rose geranium, citronella, rosemary and other “smelly” plants

Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks after time in woods or grassy areas

- Deer ticks are often no bigger than a pin head so search carefully
- Shower as soon as possible as ticks can remain on skin for hours before attaching themselves so will be removed with a washcloth

Don't assume you are immune

- You can get it more than once

Treatment of Lyme Disease

- Early stage Lyme Disease – treated with a 2 or 3 week course of oral antibiotics
- If the infection shows signs of heart or nervous system affects, then I.V. antibiotics may be required

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