

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

August 28, 2013
For Immediate Release

County's Lyme Disease Cases On the Rise *Health Department Warns Against Tick Bites*

Health Department officials say 56 cases of Lyme disease have been confirmed in Oneida County so far this year, with more than thirty cases being reported in the month of July.

"We're definitely seeing a sharp increase in the number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease in 2013," Phyllis Ellis, Director of the Oneida County Health Department said. She added, *"Last year only saw a total of fourteen cases of the tick-borne illness throughout the County."*

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria transmitted by the deer tick. Ticks will perch on grass or low-hanging vegetation, usually 18 to 24 inches above the ground, before attaching themselves to a host and inserting a small piercing element into the skin through which they ingest blood.

Lyme disease is often called 'The Great Imitator' because its symptoms mimic many other illnesses such as Fibromyalgia, Multiple Sclerosis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). The most recognizable sign of Lyme disease is a bulls-eye rash that sometimes develops around the sight of the bite, although not in 100% of cases. Early stage of the disease is marked by chills, fever, headache, stiff neck, muscle and joint pain and swollen glands. If unrecognized or untreated in the early stages, more severe symptoms may occur affecting the skin, nervous system, heart and/or joints of an individual. Lyme disease may affect people of any age.

"Most tick bites do not result in the transmission of infection; and in the case of Lyme disease only 2-3% of those bitten by a Deer Tick develop the disease," Ellis said. *"However, if you have been bitten by a tick and develop a number of these symptoms, consult your primary healthcare provider."*

According to health department officials, the best way to prevent Lyme disease is to avoid contact with ticks. Avoid wooded areas and bushy areas with high grass particularly during the warm weather. When hiking cover as much skin as possible and walk in the middle of the trail. Use insect repellent containing 20% or more DEET on exposed areas of the body carefully following the manufacturers' application instructions. The use of repellents containing permethrin on clothing, socks, boots tents and camping gear is also recommended.

After coming in from outdoors, bathe or shower as soon as possible to wash off or more easily remove ticks that may be crawling on the skin. Carefully examine your body using a hand held mirror to view all parts of your body. Parents should carefully examine children for ticks including under the arms, in and around the ears, between the legs, behind the knees and in the abdominal area. If you find a tick attached to the body, carefully remove it by grasping it with tweezers as close to the head parts as possible and pulling it straight out with a single motion. Be careful not to detach the body from the head and mouth.

Ticks can be carried on clothing and pets and later attach themselves to a human. Tumble clothes in a dryer set on high heat for one hour to kill any remaining ticks. You should regularly check your pets for ticks. Dogs can be infected with Lyme disease and usually display a fever, joint pain or lameness when infected. There is no effective vaccine to prevent Lyme disease so if you think your dog has been bitten by a tick and displays these symptoms, contact your veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.

For more information on Lyme disease visit the Oneida County Health Department web site at www.ocgov.net/oneida/health.