

# Lyme Disease & Tick Safety

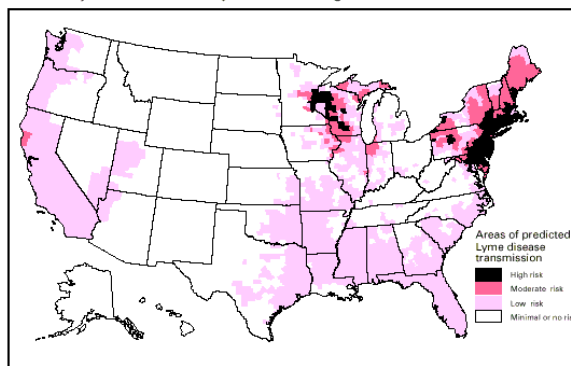
*This Everyday Safety Tailgate Talk was originally published as the April 2016 “Safety Pins by Philip E. Spiezio, Safety Officer, Washington County Office of the Safety Officer*

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that can be caused by the bite of an infected deer tick. Untreated, the disease can cause a number of health problems. Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stage of infection usually recover rapidly and completely. There are about 30,000 confirmed cases of Lyme disease reported every year.

Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at or near ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush, and shrubs, usually no more than 18–24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods, and around stone walls.

Deer ticks cannot jump or fly, and do not drop onto passing people or animals. They get on humans and animals only by direct contact. Once a tick does get on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a moist protected area.

National Lyme disease risk map with four categories of risk



Note: This map demonstrates an approximate distribution of predicted Lyme disease risk in the United States. The true relative risk in any given county compared with other counties might differ from that shown here and might change from year to year. Risk categories are defined in the accompanying text. Information on risk distribution within states and counties is best obtained from state and local public health authorities.

Here are some ways to protect yourself, while spending time in the outdoors:

- Wear light colored clothing
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots, and shirt into pants
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks
- Consider using an insect repellent with 20–30% deet—be sure to follow the directions closely
- Stay on cleared, well traveled trails, avoid contacting vegetation whenever possible
- Take a shower as soon as possible after being outdoors where ticks may inhabit
- Do a final full-body tick check at the end of the day and remove ticks promptly
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls

### **Action Item:**

Check the body carefully for ticks; once found, promptly remove them with tweezers. (Grasp the tick firmly and as close to the skin as possible. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from the skin. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic. DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products to remove the tick.)

### **Related Topics:**

- Blood Safety

### **Resources and References:**

CDC Webpage on Lyme Disease

<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.htm>

OSHA Safety Bulletin on Lyme Disease

<https://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib021103.html>

