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### Increase in Cases of Lyme Disease in Benzie and Leelanau Counties

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department has 12 reported cases of Lyme disease since June 1 of this year (6 in Benzie County and 6 in Leelanau County). This is a significant increase over past years – there were only 16 total cases reported during the previous 5 years.

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected black legged ticks. Typical symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue and a characteristic rash. For some, the condition can cause chronic and debilitating illness that can last months or years.

As more people head outdoors, the risk of incidental human-tick interactions increases as well. In the summer, not only adult ticks, but also tick larvae and nymphs are at their most active. Tick larvae and nymphs are very difficult to spot because they are smaller than a sesame seed. More tick encounters may lead to tick-borne diseases such as Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis and Babesiosis.

“Nymphal ticks are very small and difficult to detect, and most prevalent in June and July. Always perform a tick check after going outdoors, especially while in the wilderness,” stated Xavier Gagné, Registered Environmental Sanitarian at the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department.

There are steps you can take to protect yourself against ticks and the diseases they may carry:

- Use repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin for protection that lasts several hours.
- Wear clothing that has been treated with permethrin.
- Look for ticks on your body, including on your scalp and behind your ears. If you find one, immediately remove it as it must be attached for 36 to 48 hours to transmit Lyme disease. Use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible and pull upward.
- Put your clothes in the dryer on high heat for 60 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.
- Take a shower as soon as you can after coming indoors.

Questions regarding ticks and other vectors in Benzie and Leelanau counties should be directed to the Benzie Leelanau District Health Department’s Environmental Health Division at 231-882-2105. Health related questions should be directed to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800- 648-6942.

Additional information regarding ticks and Lyme disease can be found here:

- <https://www.michigan.gov/lyme>
- [https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71548\\_54783\\_54784\\_78428\\_78430\\_83603---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71548_54783_54784_78428_78430_83603---,00.html)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>
- [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Tick\\_Bite\\_Prevention\\_432367\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Tick_Bite_Prevention_432367_7.pdf)

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