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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

May 16, 2022

Increasing Cases of Lyme Disease over the last four years; Seasonal tick awareness notice

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department has already received notice of one reported case of Lyme Disease this year. Cases of Lyme Disease have increased approximately 75% over the last four years in Benzie and Leelanau Counties with 51 suspected or confirmed cases last year.

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.

“While ticks tend to live in wooded, brushy, and grassy areas, they can be spread around by animals and people nearly everywhere at this time of year,” said Scott Tucker, Superintendent of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. “Make sure to do frequent tick checks even if you don't think you've been in at-risk areas!”

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 illnesses that can last months or years.

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 231-882-2103. 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.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

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