

## Department of Health Reminds Pennsylvanians about Ticks, Warns Some Symptoms of Lyme Disease Similar to COVID-19

**Harrisburg, PA-** Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine today reminded Pennsylvanians to take proper steps to prevent against tick bites and recognize the symptoms of Lyme disease, as some symptoms of Lyme disease are similar to those of COVID-19. Ticks can carry Lyme disease, among other dangerous diseases, that can be severe if not treated properly.

“Over the past several months, we have seen an increase in the number of emergency department visits related to tick bites,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Some symptoms of Lyme disease, such as fever, chills and headache, are similar to symptoms of COVID-19. It is essential that all residents know the proper ways to protect themselves against ticks and are aware of the dangerous diseases they can carry. We want all Pennsylvanians to get outside and be healthy but do so in the safest way possible.”

Preliminary data show that more than 8,500 cases of Lyme disease were reported in Pennsylvania in 2019. The department is continuing to compile complete Lyme disease data, and final numbers for 2019 should be available within the next month. Over time, if not treated, Lyme disease can lead to severe symptoms that affect the heart, nervous system and joints.

You are at risk of getting a tick any time you are outside, including in wooded and bushy areas, areas with high grass and leaf litter, and even in your own yard. This is why it is important to take steps to decrease your chances of getting bitten. To reduce your chances of a tick bite:

- Walk in the center of trails and avoid areas with high grass and leaf litter;
- Use a repellent that contains at least 20% DEET;
- Wear light-colored clothing;
- Conduct full-body tick checks on yourself and on your pets after spending time outdoors; and
- Take a bath or shower within 2 hours after coming indoors.

If you have been bitten by a tick, make sure to monitor the area for any kinds of symptoms and contact your health care provider immediately. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include:

- A red, swollen bulls-eye shape rash;
- Fever;
- Chills;
- Headache;
- Fatigue;
- Muscle and joint aches; and
- Swollen lymph nodes.

Early stage symptoms of Lyme, like the ones mentioned above, may appear in as few as two days or as long as 30 days after exposure. Later stage symptoms like arthritis, heart and

neurological issues may appear months later. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with few to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

Some symptoms of Lyme disease are similar to COVID-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

As of 12:00 a.m., June 15, there were 79,121 positive cases of COVID-19 statewide in 67 counties and 6,243 total deaths attributed to COVID-19. Most of the patients hospitalized are 65 or older, and most of the deaths have occurred in patients 65 and older. There have been no pediatric deaths to date.

**The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:**

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at [www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts](http://www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts).

For more information on ticks and Lyme disease, or on mosquitoes and West Nile virus, visit the Department of Health website at [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).