

Lyme Disease Resources for Healthcare Professionals

Lyme Disease is an emerging infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. People can become infected with this vector-borne disease if they are bitten by a tick that is carrying the bacteria. According to the Centre for Effective Practice, Lyme Disease is the most common tick-borne illness in Canada and its incidence is increasing significantly as populations of blacklegged ticks continue to spread.

Many tick species, including the blacklegged tick, have been found in Grey-Bruce.

A section of Grey-Bruce is identified as an “Estimated Risk Area” on the 2022 version of Public Health Ontario’s Ontario Lyme Disease Map, which is updated annually. It is anticipated that this Estimated Risk Area will be significantly larger for the 2023 edition based on active surveillance by Grey Bruce Public Health. Further communications will occur when it is released.

Estimated Risk Areas are locations where blacklegged ticks have been identified or are known to occur and where people have the potential to come into contact with infective ticks, according to PHO.

Estimated Risk Areas are calculated as a 20-kilometre radius from the centre of a location where blacklegged ticks were found through drag sampling.

Despite these Estimated Risk Areas, it is important to note that blacklegged ticks feed on and are transported by migratory birds, meaning there is a possibility of encountering an infective blacklegged tick almost anywhere in Ontario.

Grey Bruce Public Health has assembled the following resources for Healthcare Professionals as we approach the seasons – spring and summer – when ticks are most active.

- The Ontario Ministry of Health has issued a [Memo to Physicians and Nurse Practitioners](#) on planned changes to the testing algorithm for Lyme Disease. These changes, set to take effect on April 1, 2023, are aimed at improving Lyme Disease diagnosis in early localized disease (by reducing the chances of a false negative result) and helping to increase the turnaround time for Lyme Disease testing, leading to earlier intervention.
- The [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has a webpage that’s packed full of Lyme Disease resources and information for healthcare providers. There is information on caring for patients after a tick bite and Lyme Disease prophylaxis after a tick bite as well as a four-part training series aimed at enabling front-line healthcare providers to recognize, diagnose, and treat Lyme Disease.
- The Centre for Effective Practice has developed an [Early Lyme Disease Management in Primary Care Tool](#) to help healthcare providers diagnose and treat early localized Lyme Disease. The CEP has also created a [patient resource](#) with information for individuals who have been bitten by a tick or diagnosed with early Lyme Disease.
- The Government of Canada has created a [Federal Framework on Lyme Disease](#), which includes Surveillance, Education and Awareness, and Guidelines and Best Practices Pillars. A report was also created on a conference held in 2016 to develop the federal framework. The [report aims to provide an overview of the key messages](#) expressed by presenters and participants who attended the conference, the majority being patients who shared their personal experiences.
- Public Health Ontario has a [webpage dedicated to Lyme disease](#), with Ontario data related to the disease and other resources, such as Estimated Risk Area Maps, Tick Submission and Testing FAQ, and Tick Surveillance.

- The CDC has assembled information about [serious bacterial infections acquired during the treatment of patients with chronic Lyme Disease](#). It describes cases that illustrate complications resulting from unproven treatments, including septic shock, abscess, and death.