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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Friday, April 13, 2012

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LYME DISEASE PREVENTION IS CRITICAL THIS SPRING

Brewster, NY—For many, the spring season means spending more time outdoors, cleaning the yard and enjoying recreational activities. It is also time for Putnam residents to protect themselves from Lyme disease, which results from the bite of black-legged ticks carrying the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Cases typically rise in the spring and summer months and this year the numbers are expected to surge, according to some researchers.

Ticks cannot fly or jump, but instead rest on low-lying vegetation and attach to passing animals and people. Campers, hikers, outdoor workers and others who frequent wooded and tall, grassy areas are more likely to be exposed. The risk is greatest along trails in the woods and on the edges of properties with tall vegetation, where deer are more common. However, ticks are also carried into lawns and gardens by pets, mice and other small animals.

Decrease your chances of being bitten by taking the following precautions:

- Tuck pants into socks and shirt into pants when in wooded and grassy areas.
- Wear light-colored clothing to spot ticks more easily.
- Check for ticks on clothing or skin frequently. Every two or three hours while outdoors is recommended. Brush them off before they can attach to your skin.

- Do a thorough tick-check of your entire body at the end of the day. Pay particular attention to the back of the knees, behind the ears, the scalp, the armpits and your back.
- If you decide to use tick repellent, apply carefully and follow all label directions. Bathe or shower and change clothes when you go back inside.
- Children may be at greater risk for reactions to repellents, in part because their exposure may be greater. Do not apply repellents directly to children. Apply to your hands and then transfer it to the child. Never apply repellents to children's hands or face.
- No one should apply repellents near eyes, nose or mouth.

If an attached tick is found, remove it immediately. The Health Department recommends the following method, as other ways can increase the likelihood of passing bacteria into the individual: (1) Use fine-tipped tweezers to carefully grasp the mouth-parts—not the body—of the tick close to the skin. (2) Gently and steadily pull the tick out without twisting or squeezing. (3) Wash the bite area thoroughly. (4) Apply antiseptic. (5) Mark the date on your calendar, and if symptoms appear call your doctor to discuss treatment options. Symptoms generally appear within 30 days of exposure and may include fatigue, chills and fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, and/or a “bull’s eye” red rash at the bite site.

Lyme disease can be difficult to diagnose, because symptoms mimic those of many other diseases. Left untreated, it can produce severe arthritis, or cause neurological or cardiac problems. However, with early detection and antibiotic treatment, recovery from Lyme disease is usually rapid and complete. For more information about Lyme disease, call the Putnam County Department of Health at (845) 808-1390 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at www.health.state.ny.us.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of Putnam County residents through prevention of illness and injury. For more information, please visit our website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.