



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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The Seasonal Return of Tickborne Illnesses

Putnam County Department of Health offers advice for reducing risk

BREWSTER, NY— The warmer weather and “cabin fever” have many people heading outdoors for some relief. While the novel coronavirus continues to be on everyone’s mind, ticks are on the increase with the spring weather. As both experienced hikers and novices alike hit the trails in record numbers, the Putnam County Department of Health wants to remind everyone to protect themselves-- not just from the virus, but from ticks as well. Wearing a mask or face covering outdoors when social distancing cannot be maintained, now goes hand-in-hand with other safeguards such as tick repellent and protective clothing to reduce the chance of infection with a tickborne disease.

Five tick borne illnesses infect residents in the Hudson Valley. While Lyme disease is the most common and the most well-known, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis are increasing as well. Powassan disease, a rarer and potentially deadly infection, is also carried by the same black-legged tick, or “deer tick,” that transmits Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and babesiosis.

“Our community has many beautiful parks and trails to explore and for many of our residents, our natural landscape has been a saving grace during this challenging time. We encourage people to continue to enjoy the outdoor spaces and also take appropriate precautions to stay healthy, which includes preventing tickborne illnesses,” says Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell.

“While tick populations vary each season, if you garden, hike, camp, hunt, work or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you should still protect yourself,” says Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD. “Personal protection and habitual tick checks on both your clothing and your body are key.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents such as those containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE). “Personal protection can include use of EPA-registered repellents as well as treating clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin or wearing pre-treated clothing,” adds Dr. Nesheiwat. Permethrin remains protective through several washings. To find the repellent that is right for you, search the

Environmental Protection Agency database <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>.

The Putnam County Department of Health works closely with healthcare providers to share the most up-to-date recommendations and best practices for evaluating, diagnosing and reporting tickborne illnesses. A physician makes the final diagnosis based on a combination of available tests, observation of the patient, and the patient history as well as description of symptoms.

The most common symptoms of Lyme disease include fever/chills, aches and pains, and a bulls-eye rash. “Because Lyme disease is prevalent in our area, residents who have been bitten by a tick and develop any of these symptoms within 30 days should visit their healthcare provider,” urges Dr. Nesheiwat. For more details regarding the symptoms and guidelines for other tickborne illnesses, visit the CDC’s webpage <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/symptoms.html>.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services, provided directly and through collaboration, include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com/coronavirus; or visit our social media sites @PutnamHealthNY on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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