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August 22, 2023

**Spike in Tick-borne Diseases Reported**  
*Health department reminds residents to take precautions*

Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) is notifying residents of an increase of tick-borne diseases in Benzie and Leelanau Counties in the last month. Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, BLDHD reported 25 suspected or confirmed cases of Lyme Disease and three suspected or confirmed cases of Ehrlichiosis. Of the 25 cases of Lyme Disease, fourteen cases have been diagnosed in the last month.

Last year, BLDHD reported 34 suspected or confirmed cases of Lyme Disease and six suspected or confirmed cases of Ehrlichiosis.

“Exposure to ticks can occur in many outdoor environments – grassy yards, gardens, and woods” states Michelle Klein, Director of Personal Health at the BLDHD. “Since we can’t always pin-point the exact place of exposure, it is best to take precautions any time you are spending time outdoors”.

Tick exposure can occur year-round, but ticks are most active during the warmer months (April-September). There are several different kinds of ticks and some of them can carry dangerous bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Not all tick bites will make you sick, but tick-borne diseases do occur in Michigan, such as Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and Babesiosis.

Lyme Disease is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States and is transmitted by the blacklegged tick. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash.

Know the precautionary measures to protect yourself and your loved ones 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. It can also be used on children over 2 months of age. Care should be taken to avoid eyes and mouth.
- Wear clothing that has been treated with permethrin.
- Before going back indoors remove ticks from your clothes and pets
- Look for ticks on your body, especially the scalp, ears, armpits, belly button, waist, and groin.
- 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.
- If you find an imbedded tick, immediately remove it as it typically requires 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.

Additional information regarding ticks and Lyme disease can be found here:

- [Preventing tick-borne illness in Michigan](#)
- [Ticks and Your Health](#)
- [MDHHS - Ticks](#)
- [CDC – Ticks](#)

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