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If You Get Bit by a Tick this Summer, Darien Health Dept Can Test the Tick for Lyme Disease

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The Connecticut Department of Public Health is predicting increased tick population this year with more of them positive for Lyme Disease, meaning increased risk for illness.

"We want to remind people to be vigilant and check themselves after being outside and also that we send ticks to be tested," Darien Health Director David Knauf said.

So far this year, the town Health Department has sent 20 ticks to the state for testing, and half were found to have Lyme disease, which is similar to the proportion of ticks with Lyme from elsewhere around the state.

Testing is free, but several requirements need to be met (see below) before the state will test a tick.

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Here's a Darien Health Department announcement about avoiding tick bites and getting any ticks that bit you checked for Lyme disease:

The Health Department accepts ticks and submits them to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) for testing. Because of the continued widespread concern and the serious health implications from Lyme Disease, this office maintains constant surveillance and **offers the following:**

- * Only those ticks removed from humans are tested for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme Disease — the lab does not test Dog Ticks or other ticks found on pets.
- * In order for a tick carrying Lyme Disease to infect an individual, it must be attached to a human for at least 24 hours and be fully “engorged” with human blood.
- * The lab will only test ticks that have been engorged.
- * If the tick was not engorged, Lyme Disease transmission did not occur and the tick will not be tested.
- * In 2016, the CAES tested 80 ticks submitted by the Darien Health Department. Of those, 17 (27%) were found to be positive.
- * So far in 2017, 20 ticks have been tested and half of those have been found to be positive. This is consistent with findings across the state for this year.
- * Testing done through CAES is free with the results available and provided by email usually within a few days.

See also:

- [What One Darien Family Went Through When Their Son Got Lyme Disease](#) (April 3)
- [Darien Moms Speak Out to Help Fight Lyme Disease](#) (March 17)

Some ways to reduce your risk to Lyme Disease:

> A recent study performed at Yale noted that the risk of contracting Lyme Disease is reduced by as much as 58% if one bathed or showered within two (2) hours of being outside in tick infested areas (which is just about anywhere there is underbrush).

> People who check themselves for ticks reduce the likelihood for contracting Lyme Disease

> Repellants, especially ones containing at least 30% DEET, have been shown to be effective for approximately three (3) hours after application.

> Reduce brush areas at the perimeter of yards, perhaps by installing a gravel walkway where the lawn meets the woods.

> Rodents, especially mice, are major carriers of ticks so you should minimize potential harborage areas such as wood and brush piles.

> Birds carry ticks so keep birdfeeders away from the house. Also, birdfeeders attract rodents that carry ticks

> Other approaches such as yard treatments with pesticides or wearing various types of protective clothing is available but we all know how difficult it is to wear long sleeves and tuck long pants into boots when hiking or working in the garden in the summer. Vigilance is the best defense.

> Free tick removal kits are available at the Health Department office in the Darien Town Hall.

If you submit a tick and it is found to be negative or it is not tested by the lab for any reason, you are not at risk for contracting Lyme Disease from that tick.