



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
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Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## HEALTH DEPARTMENT ENCOURAGES NEW YORKERS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM TICK-BORNE ILLNESSES AS SUMMER APPROACHES

*Most people with tick-borne diseases are infected while visiting or working in areas outside of New York City, except for people who live in Staten Island*

*In 2020, there were 703 cases of Lyme disease among New Yorkers*

**June 9, 2021** – The Health Department today reminds all New Yorkers to protect themselves and their families from tick-borne illnesses as summer approaches and people begin to travel and engage in outdoor activities. The most common tick-borne disease diagnosed among New Yorkers is Lyme disease; less common are anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and ehrlichiosis. The number of people in New York City diagnosed each year with Lyme disease has ranged between 700 and 800 over the past several years with 703 last year, and fewer with anaplasmosis (104), babesiosis (86), or ehrlichiosis (15). Other tick-borne diseases are rare, but have been reported, like Rocky Mountain spotted fever, *Borrelia miyamotoi* disease, and Powassan virus encephalitis. In addition to human surveillance, the City also has a surveillance system to monitor tick populations. Learn more about [tick-borne illnesses](#).

“New Yorkers should take advantage of the summer weather this year and get outside, but it’s important to remember some basic precautions while in areas where ticks may be present,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “You can protect your family and pets from ticks by using insect repellent, keeping grass cut short, and conducting tick checks after being in wooded, bushy or tall grass areas.”

### **About Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases**

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported tick-borne illness in New York City. Early symptoms of Lyme disease include a skin rash that expands over several days, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches and swollen lymph nodes. If left untreated, the infection may spread to the joints, heart or the nervous system. Most New Yorkers are infected with [Lyme disease](#) and other tick-borne diseases including [anaplasmosis](#), [babesiosis](#) and [ehrlichiosis](#) after traveling to surrounding areas, including Long Island and upstate New York, and other areas where the blacklegged and lone star ticks that transmit these diseases are well-established. However, these ticks are present throughout Staten Island and northern Bronx.

Tick surveillance by the Health Department continues to find the American dog tick in all boroughs of NYC. The blacklegged tick—which can spread Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and babesiosis—is widely established in Staten Island and areas of the Bronx including Pelham Bay

Park and Hunter Island, but not in other areas of NYC. The lone star and Asian longhorned ticks are also well established in Staten Island and parts of the Bronx, and the Gulf. Asian longhorn ticks were first identified in NYC in 2018. As the density of this has tick grown, the density of blacklegged ticks has declined. Lone star ticks can spread ehrlichiosis and have also been associated with a food allergy particularly to red meat, but Asian longhorned ticks have not been shown to transmit disease in the US. Last year, tick surveillance found another tick, the Gulf Coast tick is established in Staten Island, but in very small numbers. To learn more about ticks in New York City and the diseases they spread, visit [here](#).

### **Recommendations to prevent tick bites and tick-borne illnesses**

- **Reduce your risk at home – if ticks are present, create a tick-safe zone.**
  - Keep grass short and don't let piles of brush or leaves build up.
  - Trim shrubs and tree branches around your yard to let in more sunlight.
  - Create a barrier to define a tick-safe zone around your yard.
  - Keep playground equipment and outdoor furniture in a sunny location, away from yard edges and trees.
  - Don't leave out food that attracts deer and other wildlife.
- **Repel, don't attract, ticks.**
  - Use [insect repellent](#) that contains DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus extract (also known as PMD).
  - Permethrin products can be used on clothing or shoes (but not the skin) to repel and kill ticks.
  - Stay in the center of cleared paths and hiking trails when walking in heavily-wooded areas.
  - Wear light-colored clothing to see ticks easier.
  - Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants to prevent ticks from attaching to your skin.
  - Wear gloves when gardening.
- **After being outdoors in wooded, brushy or tall, grassy areas.**
  - Check for ticks on your body and clothing and remove any ticks you find on yourself, your child or your pet.
  - Young ticks are very small (about the size of a poppy seed), so seek help to inspect not easily reachable areas. Be sure to look carefully in areas of the body where hair is present, since it may make it difficult to see the ticks. Adult ticks are about the size of an apple seed.
  - Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors, preferably within two hours.
  - Use hot water when washing clothing to kill ticks. If hot water cannot be used, tumble dry on low heat for 70 minutes or high heat for 40 minutes.
  - Place dry clothing in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks. Wet or damp clothing might need more time in the dryer.
  - If you get a rash or a fever, let the doctor know if you may have been exposed to ticks, even if you don't remember having a tick bite.
- **Pets**

- Ask your veterinarian which flea and tick repellents are best to use on your pet.
- Dogs can also get sick from ticks. If you think your dog may have been bitten by a tick and you see changes in your dog's behavior or appetite, speak with your veterinarian.

**Additional Resources:**

Visit the Department's page on [Ticks](#)

[NYC Tick ID and Removal Wallet Card](#) (also in [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), [Italian](#))

[Ticks taking over? Take back your yard](#) (also in [Spanish](#))

[All About Ticks: A Workbook for Kids and Their Parents](#) (also in [Spanish](#))

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