

MANITOBANS ENCOURAGED TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO MINIMIZE RISK OF TICK EXPOSURE

Lyme disease is becoming more common in southern Manitoba. To help prevent infection, Manitoba Health recommends people visit their health-care provider within 72 hours to receive antibiotics if they have had a high-risk tick bite, which is defined as:

- reliably identified as a blacklegged tick;
- attached for a minimum of 36 hours or the tick was engorged; and
- from southern Manitoba (south of the 53rd parallel) or another known risk area outside of Manitoba for Lyme disease.

Blacklegged ticks, which can carry Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and babesiosis are most commonly found in and along the edge of forests and in areas with thick, woody shrubs or other vegetation. However, they can also be found in urban areas including household yards. These ticks are typically found from snowmelt to snowfall, with peaks in activity in the spring and fall.

You can protect yourself and minimize your risk of exposure by:

- applying an appropriate tick repellent on exposed skin and clothing, following label directions;
- wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts;
- staying to the centre of walking trails;
- inspecting yourself, children and pets after spending time outdoors;
- removing ticks as soon as possible from people and pets; and
- keeping grass and shrubs around homes cut short to create drier environments that are less suitable for blacklegged tick survival.

It is also important for people to be aware of the signs and symptoms of tick-borne diseases. A list of symptoms can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/tickborne/index.html. People should contact their health-care provider if they think they may have anaplasmosis, babesiosis or Lyme disease. For more information, individuals can also contact Health Links—Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or (toll-free) 1-888 315-9257.

Manitoba's partnership with the eTick program, which is developed and operated by Bishop's University, helps monitor and assess the continued expansion of blacklegged tick populations. Manitobans who find ticks on animals, humans or in various habitats can submit a picture to have it identified by experts, which will confirm if the tick belongs to a species capable of transmitting diseases. For more information or to submit a picture of a tick, visit www.etick.ca.

To learn more about blacklegged ticks, tick-borne diseases and prevention, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/tickborne/.