



Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Department Urges Residents to Practice Tick Safety

(Mason City) — The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health has confirmed the increase of ticks in our area. With the increase in tick activity, individuals are at an increased risk for exposure to Lyme disease and tick borne illnesses.

Individuals get Lyme disease from a tick bite. Persons who are bitten by a tick but do not remove the tick immediately have a higher chance of getting Lyme disease. Some people become ill after crushing a tick with their hands because its body fluids get into cuts or scratches in the skin. Lyme disease cannot be spread from person to person.

The illness usually starts as a large circular red rash at or near the site of the tick bite. The rash may increase in size and can eventually look like a "bull's eye" with a clear center. The rash is frequently not identified. Along with the rash, other "flu-like" symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, muscle and joint pain may be present. These can last for several weeks. Swelling and pain in the large joints may come and go for many years. If left untreated, further symptoms can develop within a few weeks to months after the rash occurs.

Reducing your exposure to ticks is the best defense against the diseases. Individuals can prevent Lyme disease and other tick borne illnesses by the following steps:

- Do not walk barelegged in tall grass or woods where ticks may be found.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and high socks. Tuck pants legs into socks.
- Wear light colored clothing so crawling ticks can be seen more easily.
- Conduct "tick checks" every two to three hours if spending a lot of time outdoors.
- Check all of your skin for ticks every day you spend in tick areas.
- The ticks are most often found on the thigh, arms, underarms, and legs. Ticks can be very small, so look for new "freckles."
- Use tick repellents containing the ingredients DEET for skin applications, bearing in mind that lower concentrations should be used on children, reapplying more often. Use Permethrin (on clothing).
- Always follow the directions on the can. These repellents can be found at the local drugstore.
- Wash off all repellents after going indoors.
- Remove any attached ticks immediately, using the method below.

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Facebook: Cerro Gordo County Public Health • Twitter page: <http://twitter.com/CGPublicHealth>

Web site: www.cghealth.com

If you encounter a tick, it should be removed as soon as possible. The best way is to use tweezers to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull it straight out. Do not use a twisting motion as it may leave part of the tick embedded. Do not squeeze the tick's body when removing it. Do not handle ticks with bare hands. Wash your hands after removing a tick. You may want to apply an antiseptic on the bite.

For more information about tick or Lyme disease, please call 641-421-9340 or visit our website at www.cghealth.com.

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