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MEDIA RELEASE

Information **Advisory** **Warning** **Update**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sheri J. Faust, Environmental Health Educator
sfaust@hd.stclaircounty.org
810-987-5306

St. Clair County Health Department Encourages Tick Protection This Summer

The range of blacklegged ticks in Michigan is growing and the St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) is actively conducting surveillance for this species of tick. SCCHD is encouraging residents to protect themselves from illnesses spread by ticks, such as Lyme disease. Lyme disease is caused by bacteria and is spread through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks

Ticks can attach to any part of the body but are often found in hard-to-see areas such as the groin, armpits and scalp. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36-48 hours or more before Lyme disease can be transmitted, therefore a full-body check to remove any ticks after spending time outdoors is important. Ticks should be removed by grasping it with tweezers as close to the skin's surface as possible.

There are several ways to protect yourself from tick bites:

- Wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be spotted easily
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck pants into socks. Wear boots or shoes instead of sandals
- Apply insect repellents with DEET to clothes and exposed skin
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors to more easily find ticks
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a mirror. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and hair
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride on clothing and pets and then attach to a person later
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill ticks

If a blacklegged tick is found, it can be sent to Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for testing. The SCCHD's Environmental Health Division can assist with the identification, packaging and mailing of blacklegged ticks to MDHHS. Ticks can also be directly submitted to MDHHS at www.michigan.gov/lyme.

For more information on Lyme disease, visit SCCHD's website at www.scchealth.co or contact the Environmental Health Division at (810) 987-5306. Follow us on social media @scchdmi.

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