



Hamilton

Public Health Services-Healthy and Safe Communities Department,  
Healthy Environments Division  
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Phone: (905) 546-2489 Fax: (905) 546-2787

June 25, 2019

Re: Hamilton is a Lyme disease risk area.

Dear Parents/Guardians:

A large portion of Hamilton remains an estimated Lyme disease risk area. Lyme disease is an illness caused by the bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. This bacteria is passed onto to people and pets through the bite of a blacklegged tick (also called a deer tick) that can also carry the bacteria.

This risk area covers a 20 kilometre radius that includes most of the city, except eastern parts of Stoney Creek and Glanbrook (see map attached). There is a higher chance of encountering a blacklegged tick within a risk area. To date, all the ticks found by tick dragging (a process to collect ticks in their habitat) tested negative for the Lyme disease bacteria.

Blacklegged ticks and other kinds of ticks such as American dog ticks can be found in woodlands, tall grasses and bushes. American dog ticks do not cause Lyme disease.

Ticks carrying the Lyme disease bacteria have been found locally in the Hamilton area. These ticks were submitted by members of the public to the City for identification. Ticks found attached to people, can be submitted to Public Health for identification and testing. Unfortunately, ticks found on pets are no longer accepted for testing. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has partnered with [www.etic.ca](http://www.etic.ca) and as a result the public can now upload pictures of ticks for identification within 48 hours which will be accompanied with risk messaging.

### **Protect yourself and your family with these 5 Lyme disease prevention tips:**

**Know your ticks & where to expect them.** In Ontario, the blacklegged tick is the only known tick that can transmit the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

**Prevent tick bites.** When doing activities outdoors in heavily wooded or grassy areas, wear light-coloured clothing outdoors as this makes ticks easier to spot. Wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt; wear socks and closed toe shoes and tuck your pants into your socks. When outdoors you can also use an insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin.

**Do a tick check.** Check your full body and head for attached ticks after being outside in woody or grassy areas. Also, check your children and pets for ticks (shower to remove ticks before they become attached);

**Remove ticks correctly. Do not burn or use chemicals.** If you find a tick on your body, remove it as soon as possible by using proper techniques such as using tweezers to pull the tick gently but firmly straight up so that the full head is also removed;

**Know the signs & symptoms.** Symptoms of Lyme disease usually start one to two weeks after getting a bite from an infected tick, but can begin as early as three days to as long as four weeks after a tick bite. Signs and symptoms may include a circular red “bulls-eye” rash, skin rash, fatigue, stiff neck, joint pain, and headache.

**The risk of human infection from Lyme disease in Hamilton remains low.** Not all tick bites will pass on an infection of Lyme disease—a tick has to be infected with the Lyme causing bacteria and be attached and feeding for 24 hours or more to cause Lyme disease.

Enjoy doing activities outside such as end-of-year outdoor field trips and outdoor activities offered throughout the summer but take these precautions.

For more information about Lyme disease and ticks visit: [www.hamilton.ca/lymedisease](http://www.hamilton.ca/lymedisease) or call (905) 546- 2489. If you have any questions about your child's health, please talk to your child's healthcare provider.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. DeBenedet', written in a cursive style.

Connie DeBenedet, C.P.H.I(C), BASC, COHS  
Supervisor, Health Hazard Vector Borne  
Disease Program,  
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Figure 1 Map of Hamilton Estimated Risk Area 2019

