

Don't Let Your Outside Workers Get 'Tick'-ed off this Summer



As the weather gets warmer and more workers are working outside, employers must once again assess whether their workers are exposed to the risk of tick bites and thus Lyme disease. If so, make sure to take appropriate steps to protect them.

Lyme disease is transmitted by the bite of an infected black-legged tick (also called a deer tick) or western black-legged tick, which are very hard to see and much smaller than the common dog and cattle ticks.

This picture from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) shows the size and colour of female black-legged ticks in various stages of feeding:

The symptoms of Lyme disease typically happen in three stages. And it's easily treated with antibiotics when caught early.

The first sign of infection is usually a circular rash sometimes described as a bull's eye, which occurs in about 70-80% of infected people. It begins at the site of the tick bite after a delay of three days to one month. Other common symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Chills

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Swollen lymph nodes.

If untreated, the second stage of the disease can last up to several months and include:

- Central and peripheral nervous system disorders
- Multiple skin rashes
- Arthritis and arthritic symptoms
- Heart palpitations
- Extreme fatigue and general weakness.

If the disease remains untreated, the third stage can last months to years with symptoms that can include recurring arthritis and neurological problems. But fatalities from Lyme disease are rare.

Protecting Workers at Risk for Lyme Disease

WorkSafeNB has the following tips for workers at risk of getting Lyme disease—notably those who work in tall grass, brush or forested areas:

- Wear light coloured, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Tuck the shirt into the pants and the pants into your socks to prevent ticks from crawling onto your skin.
- Use an approved tick repellent containing DEET, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Inspect clothing and exposed skin daily, paying special attention to the armpits, back of knees, head, nape of the neck and groin.

If a worker discovers that he's been a bit, it's important to remove the tick properly:

- Use fine-point tweezers.
- Grasp the tick at the place of attachment, near its head and as close as to your skin as possible.

- Slowly pulling it out straight, avoid twisting or turning the tick so its mouth parts don't break off in the skin.
- If you must remove a tick with your fingers, use a leaf or tissue to avoid contact with infected tick fluids.
- Don't prick, crush or burn the attached tick as it may release infected fluids or tissue.
- Wash your hands and disinfect the tweezers and bite site.
- Contact your doctor if you suspect you've been bitten.
- If a bull's eye-shaped rash appears, make sure to take a dated photo.
- Try to collect the specimen. Put it into a small bag or pill container with a wet piece of paper towel to keep it alive or from drying up. Take it into the nearest public health office, fill out a form and let them send it for identification and testing. Ensure the results come back to you and your physician.