



Columbia County Department of Health

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June 12, 2018
For Immediate Release

Columbia County Department of Health Reminds Residents to Take Precautions Against Ticks During Outdoor Activities

The Columbia County Department of Health today is reminding county residents of the importance of protecting themselves against ticks and tick-borne illness as they participate in outdoor activities.

This reminder comes as the Department has confirmed a case of Powassan virus, a tick-borne illness in a resident of Columbia County. Dr. Ananthkrishnan Ramani, Chief of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology at Columbia Memorial Health, working closely with the New York State Department of Health, reported the first case of Powassan virus in Columbia County. “The patient is recovering well,” said Dr. Ramani, who also serves as Medical Director for the Columbia County Department of Health. Powassan virus is a **rare** viral disease that can cause symptoms ranging from mild flu-like symptoms to life-threatening encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). The disease remains extremely rare in New York State, which has reported 29 cases to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

“In Columbia County, we have learned through years of experience that a number of preventative measures can work together for protection against tick-borne diseases,” said Jack Mabb, Columbia County Director of Public Health. “It is important for residents to plan ahead before outdoor activities, be mindful of exposure while outdoors and to remain vigilant in checking for ticks both while outdoors and afterward for the best chance of prevention against tick-borne diseases.

Best practices to protect yourself and your family from ticks and tick-borne illness include:

- Wear light colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily, as well as enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck the pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors.
- Consider using insect repellent like DEET.
- Stay on cleared, well traveled trails. Walk in the center of trails. Avoid dense woods and bushy areas.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after going indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that may be on you.
- Do a final, full-body tick check at the end of the day (also check children and pets), and remove ticks promptly.
- Wear permethrin treated clothing and footwear when in tick habitat.

The New York State Department of Health and its partners routinely collect and analyze ticks from across the state in order to better understand the tick population, tick behavior and regional trends in diseases carried by ticks. Current and retrospective tick collection and testing results are posted on the [Health Data NY](#) site.

For more information about Powassan virus, Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses, visit the [Columbia County Health Department website](#), the [New York State Department of Health website](#) or the [Centers for Disease Control](#).

The Columbia County Department of Health's 24-hour Lyme and other Tick-borne Disease Information line can be reached by dialing 518-828-7539.