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TICKBORNE DISEASE PRECAUTIONS STILL NECESSARY DURING FALL MONTHS

As you plan outdoor activities during the fall months, the Westchester County Department of Health wants you to be aware of the risk of tickborne diseases. Although most cases of tickborne disease in Westchester County occur during the spring and summer months when nymphal deer ticks are active, some cases are acquired in the fall when adult ticks are prevalent. At this time of year, adult ticks are actively seeking new hosts. Peak activity for adult deer ticks occurs in late October and early November. Precautionary measures to prevent tick bites are advised, particularly when raking leaves and when hiking or hunting.

“Efforts to heighten public awareness about tickborne illnesses continue,” stated Westchester County Commissioner Joshua Lipsman, MD, MPH. “Tickborne disease educational materials are available on our website, www.westchestergov.com/health, and are also being distributed throughout the community at health fairs and community-based organizations.”

The most well-known tickborne disease, Lyme disease, is a potentially serious disease caused by a bacterium called a spirochete. The spirochete is passed on to people and domestic animals through the bite of an infected deer tick. The most common symptom is an expanding red rash, typically a bull’s-eye rash, often at the site of the tick bite. The rash usually appears three to 30 days after the bite and may last for several weeks. Other symptoms may include fever, sore throat, fatigue, sleeping difficulties, joint and muscle pain, swollen glands and dizziness.

Another tickborne disease, ehrlichiosis, is also spread through the bite of an infected deer tick. Dual

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infection with both ehrlichiosis and Lyme disease is possible. Symptoms of ehrlichiosis can include fever, headache, chills, malaise, and muscle and joint aches. Low platelet count and low white blood cell count can also occur.

Ticks are most commonly found in grassy and wooded areas. They do not jump or fly, but instead stay low to the ground and grab onto animals and humans that brush up against them. Avoiding tick bites is the best defense against tickborne diseases. To protect yourself from being bitten, always be sure to:

- Make a habit of doing tick checks at least daily each and every time you and your family return home from enjoying outdoor activities. Inspect the entire body and remove ticks promptly. Ticks usually must be attached and feed for 36-48 hours before transmitting Lyme disease so tick checks and removal at least daily are effective means of preventing tickborne diseases.
- Avoid tick-infested areas (wooded or grassy areas).
- Wear light-colored, tightly-woven clothes to spot ticks more easily. Tuck your pants into socks and shirt into pants.
- Use insect repellants with no more than 30% DEET, but use them sparingly and with care. Products containing DEET should not be used on infants.
- Carefully read and follow directions on container and wash treated skin when tick exposure has ended.
- Use landscaping measures around your home and property to make it less attractive for deer and ticks. Consult your local nursery for advice.

For further information on tickborne diseases and their prevention, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, or the County's Tickborne Disease Infoline at (914) 813-LYME, or visit its website at www.westchestergov.com/health.