



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

July 20, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Over the past year, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has dominated the attention of healthcare professionals, affecting all areas of care. As vaccination rates rise and COVID-19 cases continue to drop in response, healthcare providers will now be able to return their focus to non-COVID-19 infections.

Because you are a vital partner in the effort to prevent tickborne infections, we are writing to inform you that the height of the 2021 season for tickborne infections in Maryland is upon us (May through October). While Lyme disease remains the most frequently diagnosed tickborne illness in Maryland residents (over 1,400 cases in 2019), cases of babesiosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) are also reported in the state every year. Providers should also be aware of emerging tickborne infections, like Powassan virus and *Borrelia miyamotoi* that are transmitted by infected blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*). The lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), the vector for both Heartland and Bourbon viruses, has also been identified in Maryland.

Since tickborne diseases often present with symptoms similar to COVID-19 infection, providers are advised to include tickborne disease testing for all patients presenting with rash, “flu-like” symptoms, including fever, fatigue, and lymphadenopathy, or altered mental status. Providers are also reminded to report all suspected or confirmed cases of babesiosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, RMSF, and Lyme disease (including clinically-diagnosed erythema migrans) to their local health department. Contact information for Maryland’s 24 health jurisdictions is available online at <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/departments.aspx>.

Tick Bite Prevention Tips

Providers should advise patients to follow the tick bite prevention tips listed below when spending time outdoors:

- Wear insect repellent that contains DEET ($\geq 20\%$) or another EPA-approved repellent and reapply as directed. Wearing clothing and gear that have been treated with permethrin will also help to repel ticks.
- Walk in the center of trails and stay away from wooded or brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants.
- Wear light-colored long pants and long sleeves to help keep ticks off of skin.

- Conduct a full-body tick check and shower or bathe within two hours of returning indoors. After removal, place clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill any hidden ticks.
- Remove any attached ticks with fine-tipped tweezers.
- Check yourself, your kids, and your pets daily for ticks, especially after spending time outdoors.

Maryland Tick Identification Service

A tick identification service is available through the University of Maryland (tick pathogen testing is not available). All ticks submitted through this service will be identified and a letter specifying the tick species will be returned to the submitter. Instructions for specimen submission are available online at

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/CZVBD/Pages/Tick-Identification.aspx>.

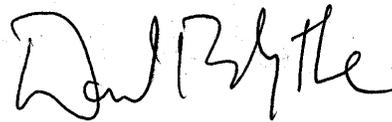
Provider Resources

- Maryland Department of Health Tickborne Disease Website: https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/CZVBD/Pages/tickborne_dz.aspx.
- Tickborne diseases of the United States. A Reference Manual for Health Care Providers: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/TickborneDiseases-P.pdf>
- CDC Lyme Disease Updates and New Educational Tools for Clinicians (Free CME): https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2021/callinfo_052021.asp
- Free prevention education materials for patients from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/toolkit/>

Sincerely,



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