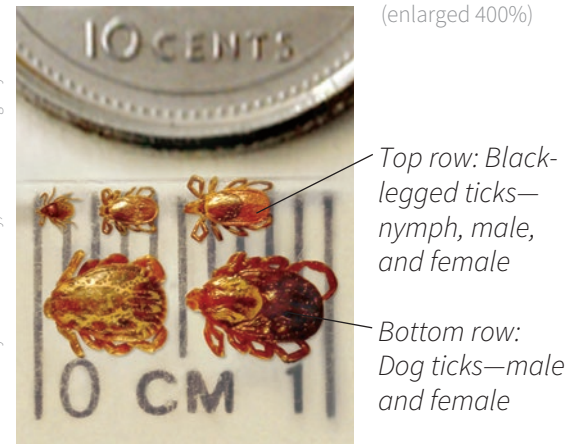


## How can I recognize a blacklegged tick?

Nova Scotia has many types of ticks. For Lyme disease, the tick of concern is the blacklegged tick, also called the deer tick. In the photo below, you can see the difference between the blacklegged tick that can carry Lyme disease and the dog (or wood) tick that does not.



Blacklegged ticks are smaller than dog ticks. They have no white markings on the large part of their body. Dog ticks usually have white markings or silver-coloured spots.

Despite their name, blacklegged ticks do not always have black legs.

Blacklegged ticks in the nymphal stage and adult female blacklegged ticks can transmit Lyme disease. Compared to the adult blacklegged ticks, the nymphal tick is very small (1 to 3 mm).

## Where are blacklegged ticks found?

*Blacklegged ticks are found throughout Nova Scotia. All areas of the province are considered as having some risk of Lyme disease.*

Information about the risk areas can be found in the Lyme Disease Estimated Risk Areas Map: [novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp](http://novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp)

Blacklegged ticks thrive in damp woods and forests where there is shade and leaf litter to provide cover. Blacklegged ticks are often found in and near wooded areas, shrubs, long grass, leaf litter, urban parks and gardens.

Blacklegged ticks cannot jump or fly. They find hosts by climbing vegetation like grasses or shrubs and waiting for a host to rub against them. They then climb onto the host's body and try to attach and feed.

Adult blacklegged ticks are most active in the spring and fall. They remain active until the air temperature is consistently below 4°C. Larvae and nymphs are most active in the spring and summer.

Ticks can come into your home on pets or clothing but most homes are too dry for ticks to live for more than a few days.

## How can I reduce the number of blacklegged ticks around my home?

You can't get rid of ticks completely, but you can reduce the number with landscaping and yard maintenance.

- Keep your yard sunny and dry. Prune bushes and trees to let in sunlight and air.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Remove leaf litter.
- Clear tall grasses and brush around your home and at the edge of your lawn.
- Put children's swings, slides and sandboxes in sunny dry places away from yard edges and trees.

- Place wood chips or gravel between your lawn and any wooded areas. This will stop ticks from moving into areas used by family and pets.
- Keep the ground under bird feeders clean. Place feeders in dry sunny places away from your house.
- Add hard surfaces—like decking, stone, tiling, or gravel—around your house and property. Use these surfaces for outdoor activities.
- Keep your woodpile neat, dry, off the ground, and away from your house.

## For more information

To learn more about Lyme disease and blacklegged ticks:

- Call your local Public Health office.
- Visit the Health and Wellness website. The website will be updated regularly with any new information about Lyme disease and the spread of infected ticks. [novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp](http://novascotia.ca/DHW/CDPC/lyme.asp)

### Public Health Offices:

Amherst.....	902-667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish.....	902-867-4500 Ext 4800
Bridgewater.....	902-543-0850
Dartmouth.....	902-481-5800
New Glasgow.....	902-752-5151
Sydney.....	902-563-2400
Truro.....	902-893-5820
Wolfville.....	902-542-6310
Yarmouth.....	902-742-7141

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Enjoy the outdoors safely

# Lyme Disease

Protect yourself from tick bites



Photo courtesy of Robbin Lindsay, Public Health Agency of Canada  
Health and Wellness would like to thank the NS Museum of Natural History, NS Department of Natural Resources, Queen Elizabeth II Laboratory, and Public Health Agency of Canada for their assistance with this pamphlet.  
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## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection. Lyme disease can be serious if it is not treated.

## How do you get Lyme disease?

You can only get Lyme disease from the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. You cannot get Lyme disease from touching, kissing or being near an infected person.

Blacklegged ticks normally feed on wild birds and mammals, but will also bite humans and domestic animals—like dogs, cats, and horses. Ticks stick to skin and feed on blood. They bite in the spring, summer and fall. Tick bites are often painless, so you may not know that you've been bitten.

In Nova Scotia, only the blacklegged tick carries the bacteria which causes Lyme disease, but not all blacklegged ticks are infected. Even if a tick carries the bacteria, it can only pass Lyme disease to a human or animal after it has filled itself with blood. This takes at least 24 hours.

## What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

The first symptom of Lyme disease is usually a rash near the tick bite. The rash may look like a bull's eye target (see the photo below). The rash usually appears between 7 and 10 days after the bite, but can appear any time between 3 and 30 days.

You may also develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headaches, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in the joints, and aches and pains all over your body. Symptoms may appear in stages and may appear over a period of months.



*Bull's eye rash*

Contact a health care provider if symptoms appear after a tick bite.

It is very helpful to know if and when you've been bitten by a tick and to know the symptoms of Lyme disease. This is because a health care provider will use your symptoms, the likelihood that you've been bitten by a tick, and sometimes a blood test, to diagnose Lyme disease.

## How is Lyme disease treated?

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. Early treatment almost always results in a full recovery.

Lyme disease is rarely life threatening, but if it is not treated, serious symptoms or illnesses may develop. These are not common, but can include facial palsy, heart problems, or chronic joint problems such as arthritis. Lyme disease symptoms can also be treated by antibiotics. Occasionally, the symptoms may continue if treatment has been delayed for too long.

## How can I prevent Lyme disease?

You can prevent Lyme disease by avoiding blacklegged ticks, checking often for tick bites, and removing ticks before they do any harm.

If you are in an area where blacklegged ticks are found:

### 1. Protect yourself from ticks.

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET or Icaridin. Follow the directions on the package carefully. Use is different for different ages. Do not use DEET or Icaridin on babies less than 6 months old.
- Cover as much of your skin as possible whenever you are in an area where ticks are found. Wear enclosed shoes. Tuck your shirt into your pants. Tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Wear light-coloured clothing with a tight weave. This will help you to see ticks more easily.
- Walk along well-traveled paths. Avoid contact with the longer grass and vegetation.

### 2. Check yourself, your children, and your pets after walking in grassy or wooded areas.

- Check clothing for unattached ticks.
- Check the body carefully. Feel for bumps and look for brown spots on the skin. Pay special attention to the scalp, behind the ears, the armpits, the back of the knees, and the groin or pelvic region.
- Take a bath or shower within 2 hours of being outdoors. This can help you to find ticks attached to the body quickly.
- Put clean and dry outdoor clothes in a dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.

### 3. Remove ticks as soon as you find them.

- Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers. Get as close to the skin as you can.
- Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.
- Wash the site with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer.

### 4. Record the date and location of the tick bite.

- Contact your health care provider right away if a rash appears or you develop flu-like symptoms after a tick bite.