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## Lyme Disease Update 2021

**Attention:** Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse Practitioners, Neighboring Health Units, Ontario Health Central, Occupational Health Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Community Health Centres, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices

**Date:** May 12, 2021

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**The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) will be hosting a Lyme disease webinar on Wednesday May 19, 2021 from 0800 – 0900 further details are attached.**

Lyme disease is a growing health risk for residents and visitors of the Simcoe Muskoka region. Climate change continues to drive rapid expansion of blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) habitat within Simcoe Muskoka. Furthermore, a greater number of people are spending more time engaged in outdoor activities locally in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on national and international travel. These two factors heighten the need for increased Lyme disease awareness among the public and among healthcare providers this spring and summer.

Public Health Ontario has updated its annual [2021 PHO Lyme disease risk areas map](#). The Ontario risk areas are determined by standard provincial active tick surveillance methods (i.e., tick dragging). Active surveillance, which is typically conducted twice yearly, was not conducted in Simcoe Muskoka in 2020 due to human resource restrictions. Passive surveillance, informed by tick submissions by healthcare providers and residents, has identified infected blacklegged ticks throughout Simcoe Muskoka. The prevalence of *Borrelia burgdorferi* carriage in blacklegged ticks in the local risk areas was estimated to be below 20% in 2018 but is expected to increase over time.

### Clinical supports

Guidance on the evaluation and management of Lyme disease was updated in 2020.

- The *Center for Effective Practice* has updated their [Tool for Early Lyme Disease Management in Primary Care](#).
- *Health Quality Ontario* continues to offer an excellent [algorithm for the management of tick bites and investigation of early localized Lyme disease](#), though revisions are pending.
- A summary of the updated guidance from the *Infectious Disease Society of America* can be found [here](#).

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View all Public Health Alert bulletins at the Health Professionals Portal

[www.smdhu.org/HPPortal](http://www.smdhu.org/HPPortal)



Subscribe to urgent health email communications (E.g. Public Health Alert) by registering at [www.smdhu.org/PHAlert](http://www.smdhu.org/PHAlert)

Additional resources for the clinical management of Lyme disease are available on the [SMDHU healthcare provider portal](#).

### **Tick Submission Process**

SMDHU suspended tick submissions on April 16, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative, SMDHU encourages the public to use eTick and to contact their health care provider if the tick has been identified as a blacklegged tick. [eTick.ca](#) is a public image-based tick identification platform that can quickly and accurately identify tick species

SMDHU encourages health care providers to submit ticks for identification and testing once they have been removed from a patient. Public Health Ontario provides a [surveillance form](#) that is to be filled out and submitted along with the tick. Before submitting the tick to Public Health Ontario, health care providers may also wish to submit a tick image to eTick.ca, which may provide more rapid identification of the tick species. **The identification and bacterial testing of ticks is generally unhelpful for the clinical management of Lyme disease.** Results are received well beyond the time when clinical decisions need to be made. In addition, the presence or absence of *B. Burgdoferi* in a blacklegged tick does not reliably predict the likelihood of clinical infection.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Lyme disease is designated as a disease of public health significance in Ontario. Suspected or confirmed cases of Lyme disease are reportable to local public health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.7* and must be communicated to SMDHU using the [Infectious Diseases reporting form](#).

### **Prevention & patient counselling**

Direct your patients to the following resources that highlight key protective behaviours:

- [smdhu.org/lyme](http://smdhu.org/lyme)
- [Ticks & Lyme Disease Fact Sheet](#) (Ontario Ministry of Health)

New for 2021, SMDHU is engaged in enhancing public awareness of ticks and Lyme disease through enhanced signage in at-risk areas and through an online educational video demonstrating proper tick-checking technique. See [smdhu.org/lyme](http://smdhu.org/lyme) for additional resources.

For more information on vector-borne diseases in Simcoe Muskoka please visit our [Health Professionals Portal](#) and our [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) toolkit.



# LYME DISEASE:

AN UPDATE FOR SIMCOE MUSKOKA CLINICIANS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021 FROM 8:00 A.M. - 9:00 A.M.

**PRESENTED BY:** Dr. Colin Lee, Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Nicolas Sheppard-Jones, Medical resident

## LOCATION:

Online meeting (Zoom)

## REGISTRATION PAGE:

[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/JFY/HPPortal/  
PCPCategories/InfectiousDiseases/Lyme-Disease-Webinar](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/JFY/HPPortal/PCPCategories/InfectiousDiseases/Lyme-Disease-Webinar)

## JOIN ZOOM MEETING:

[zoom.us/j/92420473572?pwd=QVJzLzhEc2NXYXE0TG1RZnh  
EdFpSdz09](https://zoom.us/j/92420473572?pwd=QVJzLzhEc2NXYXE0TG1RZnhEdFpSdz09)

Meeting ID: 924 2047 3572

Passcode: 746186

Dial-in: 855-703-8985 Canada Toll-free

## INTENDED AUDIENCE:

Family physicians, nurse practitioners

*Note: This is an open invitation and may be forwarded to interested parties*

## ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Lyme disease is a growing health hazard in the Simcoe Muskoka region. Clinical evaluation and management are made challenging by signs and symptoms that can be non-specific, and diagnostic testing that is limited. This webinar will review management of suspected or confirmed Lyme disease, and share updated guidance issued in 2020 on the treatment of Lyme disease.

**By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- i. Recognize that risk of exposure to blacklegged ticks is widespread in the Simcoe and Muskoka regions
- ii. List and interpret appropriate diagnostic tests for Lyme disease and distinguish these from surveillance activities
- iii. Describe Lyme disease prophylaxis and treatment in accordance with updated clinical management guidelines
- iv. Describe when and how to report suspected or confirmed Lyme disease to public health authorities

