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## Lyme Disease Update 2022

**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 24, 2022

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Lyme disease is a growing health risk for residents and visitors of the Simcoe Muskoka region. Climate change continues to drive rapid expansion of the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) habitat within our geographical area.

Public Health Ontario (PHO) has updated its annual [2022 PHO Lyme disease risk areas map](#). The new risk area for our region includes the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Canadian Federal Base Borden, Township of Clearview, Township of Essa, Town of Innisfil and Town of New Tecumseth. The Ontario risk areas are determined by standard provincial active tick surveillance methods (i.e., tick dragging). Active surveillance in 2021 identified four (4) ticks as blacklegged ticks; of which two (2) were positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the pathogen responsible for Lyme disease. 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 (CEFP) now have a guidance document [Tool for Early Lyme Disease Management in Primary Care](#).
- Health Quality Ontario (HQO) 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](#).
- [SMDHU recorded webinar for clinicians](#) led by Dr Colin Lee and recorded in May 2021 which, among other topics, discusses, starting at the 36 min 20 sec mark, the differences between the CEFP and HQO treatment guidelines



Additional resources for the clinical management of Lyme disease are available on the [SMDHU Healthcare Provider Portal](#).

### Tick Submission Process

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) suspended tick submissions on April 16, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative, SMDHU encourages the public to use [eTick.ca](#) 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 a tick species.**

SMDHU encourages health care providers to submit ticks for identification and testing when they have been removed from a patient. PHO provides a [surveillance form](#) that is to be filled out and submitted together with the tick. Before submitting the tick to PHO, 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 as results are often 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](#)
- [Ticks & Lyme Disease Fact Sheet](#) (Ontario Ministry of Health)

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