

Lyme disease in the workplace



Lyme disease is on the rise in Quebec and presents an occupational health risk for outdoor workers

Find out how to protect yourself

Stay informed,
stay healthy!



Recommendations for workers

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is an infection that occurs following the bite from a tick that carries a specific bacterium.



Tick removal from the skin within **24 hours** following a bite greatly reduces the risk of acquiring the disease.

Symptoms

One or more of the following symptoms may appear following the bite from an infected tick :



The most common symptom, usually appearing 3-30 days after the bite, is an expanding, circular **skin rash** around the bite site. It can be homogeneous or bull's-eye-shaped. The rash expands rapidly (>5 cm, or about 2 in.) and persists for **over 48 hours**, with little or no pain or itching.

Fatigue, fever, headaches, and body aches may also occur.

If left untreated, other symptoms may appear in the weeks to months following the bite, namely:

- Multiple, expanding skin rashes elsewhere on the body
- Body pain, especially in the neck
- Swelling in one or more joints (ex. knee)
- Facial palsy or numbness in a limb
- Chest pain, palpitations and/or dizziness

Treatment

Antibiotics are an effective treatment for Lyme disease if infection is detected and treated in a timely manner.



Warning

In-house, commercial tests to detect bacteria in ticks are not recommended.



For more information, visit: www.quebec.ca/Lyme [available in French and English]

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Institut national de santé publique

Québec



High-risk areas

It is possible to acquire Lyme disease anywhere in the province of Québec, but especially in high-risk areas where ticks carrying the bacteria are established, including:



- Northern and Western **Estrie**;
- Most of **Montérégie**;
- Southwestern **Mauricie-et-Centre-du-Québec**;
- Southwestern **Outaouais**.

High-risk environments

Be on the lookout when you see...

Woodland and forests



Tall grass and bushes



Leaf litter



Gardens

Tick activity period



Ticks are active whenever ambient temperature reaches **4°C**, in areas without any snow cover.

Characteristics of a tick



- Has 8 legs (in nymphal and adult stages);
- Reaches 1 - 3 mm in size (before feeding);
- Does not jump, fly or drop down from trees;
- Awaits in low vegetation for an animal or human to brush up against it;
- Grabs its prey when in direct contact.

Photo: *Ixodes scapularis* ticks at all different life stages: larva, nymph, adult male and adult female (before and after blood meal).

Did you know?

Nearly a dozen different tick species have been recorded in Québec.

Tick bites are usually painless and often go unnoticed.

Ixodes scapularis, also known as the blacklegged tick or deer tick, is the only species in Québec that can transmit Lyme disease. However, not all ticks of this species carry the bacteria.



Québec

Québec

How to protect yourself against Lyme disease?

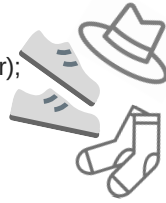
➔ Minimize exposure during activities in high-risk environments

➔ What to do in case of a bite

BEFORE the activity

- 1 Adapt work clothes. Wear:
 - light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants (makes spotting ticks easier);
 - long socks and closed shoes;
 - hat, when possible.

** Tuck shirt into pants, and pants into socks.*

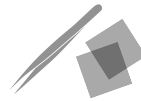


- 2 Apply insect repellent, containing:
 - Icaridine (20% or less), or
 - DEET (30% or less)

...on exposed body parts, closely following instructions.



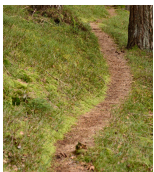
- 3 Make sure you have access to fine-tipped tweezers and antiseptic swabs.



DURING the activity

Whenever possible, avoid tall grass and shrubs, walking preferentially:

- in the center of trails;
- on artificial surfaces (gravel, mulch, etc.)



AFTER the activity

- 1 Carefully inspect all exposed belongings (clothes and equipment), especially before entering a building or vehicle.

- 2 Perform a thorough body check, paying particular attention to these less visible body parts:

- scalp and hairline;
- neck;
- behind ears;
- armpits;
- back;
- navel;
- genitals and groin;
- behind knees.



Seek help if needed

- 3 When possible, put work clothes in the dryer at high heat to remove and kill ticks:

- **10 minutes** for **dry** clothes;
- **60 minutes** for **damp** or **wet** clothes.



- 4 Take a shower as soon as possible after activity to:

- dislodge unattached ticks;
- perform a thorough body check.



What type of workers are at risk?

All outdoor workers in contact with high-risk environments are potentially at risk.



THINGS TO AVOID...



- remove the tick using fingers or fingernails;
- burn the tick;
- apply products to remove the tick (eg. Vaseline, oil, rubbing alcohol, nail polish)
- turn, twist, crush or jerk the tick using tweezers;
- squeeze the abdomen of the tick;



These behaviours can increase the risk of transmission of the disease.

Remove the tick as soon as possible

- 1 Grasp the tick as close as possible to the skin, using fine-tipped tweezers.

- 2 Pull the tick gently, but firmly and continuously, **without turning it or crushing it**, to allow the entire tick to be removed without tearing.



- 3 Place the tick in a well-sealed container, and keep it in the refrigerator, which might be useful in case of consultation with a physician.



- 4 After removing the tick, clean your skin with soap and water. Wash your hands and tweezers thoroughly. Antiseptic swabs can also be used.

- 5 Call **Info-Santé 8-1-1** to know what to do next (free service, in French and English)



AFTER removing the tick



- 1 Write down:
 - time and date of tick removal;
 - body part bitten;
 - time, date and location of high-risk activity.

- 2 Inform your employer about the bite.

- 3 Report the event in the "accidents, incidents and first aid" registry.