

Keeping Ticks and Lyme Disease at Bay

By Richard Bell

The weather’s warm enough to worry about one of the downsides of the great outdoors, Lyme disease, from the bite of a blacklegged tick infected with the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacterium that causes the disease.

Although a quick course of antibiotics will usually kill off the bacteria, there are still no simple or reliable methods for diagnosing the disease, leaving patients at the mercy of their doctors’ evaluation of the bewildering variety of symptoms which Lyme Disease sufferers present. And if a victim misses this early treatment window, even chronic courses of antibiotics may not be enough to eliminate the disease.

The first case of Lyme Disease in the province was reported in 2002, and the numbers have been going up ever since, thanks in part to birds carrying the ticks across the province. Provincial health officials warn that Nova Scotians may encounter blacklegged ticks anywhere in the province, and that HRM is one of the province’s hot spots.

Symptoms

In some people, the first indication of a bite is a “bulls-eye” rash, an inflamed area that looks like a crudely drawn bulls-eye target. But many people never experience this rash, and the blood tests for the disease are unreliable. In 2021, the Nova Scotia Health Authority authorized the province’s pharmacists to offer free assessments of the need for treatment to prevent Lyme Disease.

Avoiding Ticks

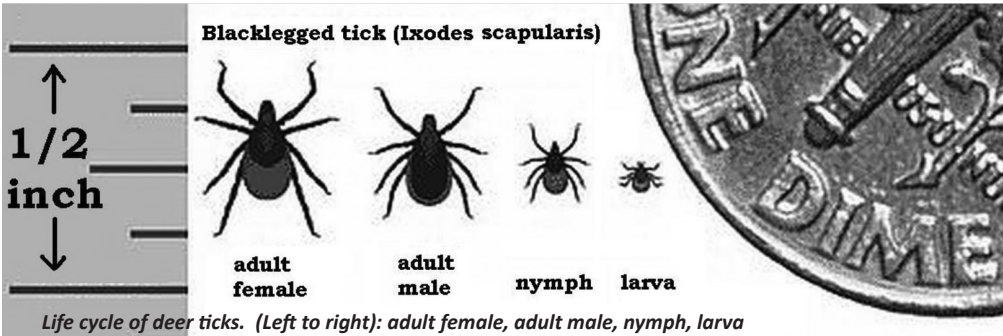
The Nova Scotia Health Department has released the following list of things you can do to reduce the possibility of getting Lyme disease:

- wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants to increase visibility.
- wear light-coloured socks and enclosed shoes while working

or playing outside or hiking.

- pull socks up over pant legs and tuck in shirts.
- spray clothing and exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin and always make sure to follow directions on the label.
- check clothing and body carefully for ticks after working or playing outside, especially in bushes or long grass. Pay special attention to armpits, the back of the knees, and the

antibiotics. For example, in a “Statement for Managing Lyme Disease in Nova Scotia,” the Infectious Diseases Expert Group (IDEG) of the Department of Health and Wellness concludes, “Studies have demonstrated that longer-term antibiotic treatment is no more effective than the standard recommended course of treatment and may be associated with complications. Longer-term antibiotics are not recommended.” In Nova Scotia, Donna Lugar has



groin or pelvic region.

- put outdoor clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.
- remove any ticks attached to the skin promptly and safely clean the bite area with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer.
- keep grass cut and remove leaf litter to minimize a suitable habitat for ticks on properties.

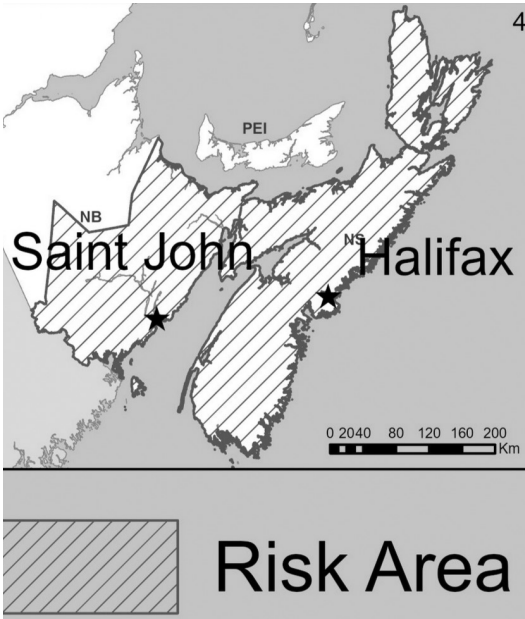
Chronic Lyme—A Bitter Political Fight

Even patients who are diagnosed quickly and treated with antibiotics can develop fatigue, pain, or joint and muscle aches that can sometimes last for months. Treating people with chronic symptoms has become a highly controversial area of medical practice. Some doctors prescribe long-term treatment with high doses of antibiotics for people with such post-Lyme symptoms, and there is a growing movement of sufferers who swear by this approach.

But most doctors and public health officials oppose such long-term use of

been leading a grassroots lobbying effort to get the provincial government to take three steps to fight TBDs (Tick Borne Diseases) more aggressively: a clinic dedicated to Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, better education for health care providers, and a “Non-Partisan Lyme Disease Task Force” that includes people “with lived experience of TBDs.” Thus far, neither the Dexter, McNeil, nor Houston administrations have adopted any of these suggestions. Lugar’s website is <https://shiningthelymelight.com/>.

For more information, including how to remove and dispose of ticks safely, visit <https://www.novascotia.ca/ticksafety>.



Public Health Service of Canada

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Lobster Fishers Honour Health Care Workers

Lobster fishers from Petpeswick Inlet and nearby kept up a great Father’s Day tradition this year, providing free fresh cooked lobster to the staffs of Twin Oaks Hospital and the Birches Nursing Home in recognition of their dedication and hard work on behalf of all the residents of the community.



A well-built wooden trash bin was no match for a bear in Musquodoboit Harbour.

MLA MEMO

Increase in the Nova Scotia Child Benefit

Our province is helping make life more affordable for Nova Scotian families by increasing the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. Families earning less than \$26,000 will see a \$250 increase per child. Families earning between \$26,000 and \$33,999 will see a \$250 increase for the first child and \$125 for each additional child. People do not have to apply for the benefit, as it is based on personal income tax returns. Increases will apply as of the July payment.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/mv74xrzu> for more information.

Applications Open for Seniors Property Tax Rebate

Applications are now open for the Seniors Property Tax Rebate. This program helps low-income seniors by covering up to 50% of their last year's property tax bill up to a maximum of \$800. To check your eligibility apply use the link below, call our office or 211, or visit an Access Nova Scotia location. Applications will be accepted until December 31st, 2023. Seniors who received the rebate last year will receive an application by mail.

Apply here: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/apply-property-tax-rebate-property-tax-rebate-seniors>

New Sick Note Rules Take Effect

This is one of many ways our province is delivering more healthcare, faster.

Our doctors work hard each day to see as many patients as possible. We are focused on reducing the unnecessary tasks doctors do so they can focus on you, the patient. That's why we are changing how sick notes work in our province.

Less time doing paperwork means more time helping patients. Employers are no longer permitted to request a sick note unless an employee is absent for more than 5 working days or has already had 2 absences of 5 or fewer working day in the previous 12-month period. The changes also allow healthcare professionals other than doctors to provide sick notes when they are required.

Prior to these changes it was estimated that doctors in Nova Scotia spent about 50,000 hours a year writing sick notes.

Learn more here: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20230630001>

Need a Family Doctor Registry-Patient Information

Anyone on the Need a Family Practice Registry can now add health information to their profile that will be used to direct them to services, resources, and care options in their community. You can register for the Need a Family Practice Registry or update your profile with current health information, here <https://needafamilypractice.nshealth.ca/> or call 1-833-941-0040.

Pharmacy Care Clinics

There's a new way to access healthcare in Nova Scotia. The Community Pharmacy Primary Care Clinic program has expanded to 26 locations from 12. The Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS), in partnership with the province of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Health, is piloting new primary care clinics at select pharmacy locations. Clinics are located in areas with the highest number of people without a family doctor.

These pharmacist-led clinics will provide an extended suite of pharmacy primary care

services at no charge to people with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card. These services include assessment and prescribing for Strep Throat, Pink Eye, UTIs, Chronic Disease Management (Diabetes, Asthma, COPD), prescription renewals for all medications and more. Publicly funded vaccines for adults and children are also available at these clinics as well as medical injections (fee may apply).

For locations and more information visit: <https://pans.ns.ca/cppc>

Incentivizing Doctors

We need to connect patients to healthcare even faster. That's why the province is providing a \$10,000 bonus to doctors who accept 50 patients with higher needs from the newly updated waitlist. If doctors feel they have the ability to provide care to more Nova Scotians, they'll receive \$200 for every patient they accept beyond the 50. This is a major step in connecting patients with the care the need, faster and rewards our doctors for their hard work.

Federal Carbon Tax

The Federal Carbon Tax will increase the cost of gasoline, diesel, and other everyday goods. The Atlantic Premiers have joined to launch a campaign to oppose the Federal Clean Fuel Regulations.

The new campaign, Fight the Federal Gas Hike, encourages Atlantic Canadians to send a letter to their Member of Parliament asking them to reconsider their decision to support the carbon tax. Visit <https://fightthefedhike.ca/> to learn more and write your letter.



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Summer

