Tick bite risk in Québec

It is possible to be bitten by ticks **in any region of the province.**

The main infection transmitted by ticks is **Lyme disease**, but other infections can also be transmitted by tick bites.

High-risk environments

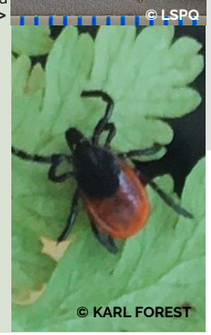
Activity period

Ticks can be active whenever outside temperatures reach 4°C, year-round.

Characteristics

- Has 8 legs (nymph and adult stages)
- Measures between 1 and 13 mm (depending on species and growth stage)
- Does not jump, fly or drop from trees or high surfaces
- Attaches to people or animals when they brush against vegetation where it hides
- Attaches itself firmly to the skin

PHOTO : ***Ixodes scapularis*** ticks at different life stages : larvae, nymphs, adult males, adult females and blood-engorged females. >>>>>>



Did you know?

- A dozen species of tick have been identified in Québec.
- Tick bites are generally 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 are infected with the bacteria causing the disease.

Lyme Disease

- Lyme disease is an infection that may occur after the bite of a tick carrying a specific bacteria.
- Ticks can stay attached to the body for several hours.
- Removing the tick within 24 h following a bite considerably reduces the risk of contracting the disease.

Symptoms

The most common symptom is a skin rash around the bite :

- Usually appears 3-30 days after the bite
- Often round or bull's eye-shaped
- With or without a clear outline
- Can look like a bruise on darker skin tones
- **Expands rapidly (> 5 cm)**
- **Persists for more than 48 h,** with little or no pain/itching.

>>> Fatigue, headaches and aches may also occur.

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

- Multiple spreading rashes
- Neck pain
- Chest pain, palpitations
- Swelling in one or more joints
- Dizziness
- Facial paralysis
- Numbness of a limb

Treatment

Antibiotic treatment is generally effective against Lyme disease if detected and treated early.

Warning

Tick testing to detect the presence of the bacteria causing Lyme disease is not recommended and should not be used as an aid in patient diagnosis and treatment.

For more information : www.quebec.ca/lyme OR www.inspq.qc.ca/zoonoses/tiques

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Institut national de santé publique Québec

Lyme disease in the workplace

Recommendations for employers

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

Find out how to protect your employees

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How to protect outdoor workers?

Minimize workers' exposure to ticks during activities in high-risk environments, and inform them appropriately

Minimizing exposure

1 **Create** safer zones between high-risk environments and workplaces :

- lay down mulch/gravel between wooded areas
- collect dead leaves
- cut high grass and bushes

2 **Encourage** employees to stay in the center of trails when possible.

3 **Adapt** work clothing to cover employees adequately :

- long, light-colored clothing
- hat
- closed-toe shoes

✔ **Cover** the body as much as possible (e.g. by tucking the bottoms of your pants into your socks).

✔ **Consider** choosing permethrin-treated clothing approved by Health Canada.

4 **Provide** bug repellent containing :

- Icaridine (20% or less) **OR**
- DEET (30% or less).

Apply to parts of the body not protected by clothing, closely following the instructions.

What type of workers are at risk?

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

Inform

Provide your employees with information on :

- Lyme disease
- Risks in the workplace
- Preventive measures

✔ An employee information leaflet is available from your local public health department.

Offer first aid training :

- tick removal
- disinfection

✔ Remind your employees of the importance of inspecting their bodies, clothing and equipment at the end of each high-risk activity.

First aid

Each first aid kit should contain :

- fine-tipped tweezers
- antiseptic swabs
- gloves
- airtight containers
- information leaflets on tick removal

In case of bite?

Establish a protocol in the event of a tick bite

1 **Remove** the tick as soon as possible : Using fine-tipped tweezers, grab the tick at the base of the skin and pull firmly and vertically, without squeezing the tick's abdomen.

2 **Keep** the tick in the freezer in an airtight, well-identified container, in case you need to consult a doctor (date of bite, visited location, etc).

3 **Call** Info-Santé 811 to know what to do next. Depending on your situation, it is possible to receive a preventive antibiotic. *[Free service, available in French or English]*

4 **Record** the bite in the "accident, incident and first-aid" registry (CNESST).

✱ *Lyme disease is recognized as an occupational disease by the Régime de santé et de sécurité du travail.*

Procedure after each high-risk activity

✔ **Take** a shower as soon as possible to :

- dislodge loose ticks
- inspect the body for fixed ticks or bite marks

✔ **Dry** the garments in the dryer at very hot temperatures for 60 min (to remove and kill any tick)

✔ **Wash** and dry as usual