

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for May 2, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about preventing Lyme disease, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

A little over a decade ago, we first became aware that Coshocton County was a new hotspot for the blacklegged tick. This is significant, because ticks are the main way that Lyme disease is transmitted from the white-footed mouse to humans.

If you feel like you have heard more about Lyme disease in recent years, that is because it is more prevalent in eastern and southeastern Ohio now than in previous decades. To raise awareness about the disease and spread the word about prevention, May is recognized as Lyme disease awareness month.

Lyme disease was first identified in 1975 in Lyme, Connecticut. An unusually large number of children were being diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. Researchers discovered that most of the affected children lived and played near wooded areas where ticks live. Further study found that the children had tick bites from blacklegged ticks.

Here in Ohio, there are three kinds of ticks that have the potential to spread types of disease- the American dog tick, lone star tick, and the blacklegged tick – sometimes called “deer tick.” The blacklegged tick is the one responsible for spreading Lyme disease.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, blacklegged ticks are active throughout the year in Ohio. However, the nymphs are active in the spring and summer with a peak emergence coming up here in May through June. The onset of human Lyme disease cases occurs year-round in Ohio but peaks in summer following the emergence of nymphs.

Most people are most familiar with the American dog tick, as it is the most common hard tick in Ohio. These ticks can be the size of a raisin when engorged with blood. However, blacklegged ticks are much smaller. As adults, they are less than half the size of dog ticks. And in the immature nymphal stage, they are even smaller. Males can be less than 1/16 inch and females just slightly larger.

The Ohio Department of Health collects data about cases of Lyme disease. Ohioans of all ages get sick with Lyme disease, but data collected by the Zoonotic Disease Program suggest that males are more at risk for Lyme disease than females. Also, it may be surprising to know that over the past decade, cases have been higher in children than adults. Boys between the ages of ten and 14 years appear to be at particularly high risk. Many cases of Lyme disease are reported in females between the ages of five and nine.

The CDC explains that Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic “bullseye” skin rash. I’ll note that not everyone reacts with a rash, so it can be very possible to have a tick bite with no “bullseye” rash left as a calling card. If untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system.

If you will be walking in wooded or high grassy areas, tuck long pants into socks and shirt into pants. Wearing light colors make ticks easier to see. Apply tick repellent containing DEET of at least 25%. Check your whole body for ticks and shower soon after being outside where ticks might be.

To remove an embedded tick, use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to skin as possible. Do not crush the tick. Pull it straight out. Disinfect the bite and wash your hands. Do not use a hot match, nail polish or petroleum jelly to remove a tick.

And now let’s look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Do you enjoy cooking? Would you also like to know time-saving tips to maximize your efforts in the kitchen? Join OSU Extension for “Kitchen Gadgets and Gizmos” tonight from 6:30-7:30 PM at the Clary Garden Pavilion. I’ll be sharing tips collected from Extension educators, focusing on affordability, food safety, and convenience. Bring along your favorite kitchen tool or cooking hack and we’ll learn from one another. You can find details about future programs related to financial wellness, food preservation, diabetes, and more at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!