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WV SEES MARKED INCREASE IN REPORTED HUMAN LYME DISEASE CASES
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As of August 7, 2015, West Virginia has reported 119 confirmed and probable cases of Lyme disease. Only 77 confirmed and probable cases were reported during the same time period in 2014. Additionally, 29 counties have reported confirmed and/or probable cases this year (up from 22 and 23 counties for all of 2013 and 2014, respectively). Eighty-four (84) cases (70.6%) were reported from Lyme disease “endemic” counties of Berkeley, Hampshire, Hancock, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, and Wood.

For a county to be considered “endemic” for Lyme disease, it must have two cases of Lyme Disease that have been confirmed with: 1) presence of erythema migrans (sometimes referred to as the “bulls-eye rash”); 2) appropriate CDC confirmatory laboratory results; and 3) have been acquired within the reporting county. Through August 7, 2015, four new counties, Kanawha, Marshall, Roane and Wetzel, have met this criteria, Effective August 15, 2015, these four counties will be classified as Lyme disease endemic. Currently, Monongalia County has no confirmed cases of Lyme Disease in 2015.

The Lyme disease bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is spread through the bite of infected ticks. The blacklegged tick (or deer tick, *Ixodes scapularis*) spreads the disease in the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and north-central United States.

Ticks can attach to any part of the human body but are often found in hard-to-see areas such as the groin, armpits, and scalp. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted.

Most humans are infected through the bites of immature ticks called nymphs. Nymphs are tiny (less than 2 mm) and difficult to see; they feed during the spring and summer months. Adult ticks can also transmit Lyme disease bacteria, but they are much larger and are more likely to be discovered and removed before they have had time to transmit the bacteria. Adult *Ixodes* ticks are most active during the cooler months of the year.

If you had a tick bite, live in an area known for Lyme disease, or have recently traveled to an area where it occurs, and observe any of these symptoms, you should seek medical attention. The early localized stage (3 to 30 days post-tick bite) signs and symptoms are: Red, expanding rash called erythema migrans (EM) and/or fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes. Some people may experience an EM rash and the general symptoms. In other people, general symptoms may be the only evidence of infection.

Patients treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover rapidly and completely. Antibiotics commonly used for oral treatment include doxycycline, amoxicillin, or cefuroxime. For more information contact the Monongalia County Health Department at 304-598-5100.

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