

MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS UPDATE FOR PHYSICIANS

June 15, 2018

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MHO UPDATES, go to:

[https://
www.interiorhealth.ca/
AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/
Pages/MHOUpdates.aspx](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/Pages/MHOUpdates.aspx)

Medical Health Officers:

Dr. Trevor Corneil

Dr. Kamran Golmohammadi

Dr. Silvina Mema

Dr. Sue Pollock

Dr. Karin Goodison

CONTACT INFO:

Duty MHO line (24/7)

1-866-457-5648

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Epidemiology:

In BC, **less than 1% of ticks tested** carry the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease. Most ticks that carry *Borrelia burgdorferi* are found in southwestern BC, including Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast, Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. They can also be found in parts of the Interior of BC.

In the Interior approximately 1,200 ticks were submitted for testing in the past 5 years (1050 Dermacentor and 150 Ixodes). None of the Ixodes ticks were positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi* PCR.

The rate of Lyme disease in BC is <1/100 000 population. This is lower than the Canadian rate and far lower than rates in some US states, especially the northeastern US (rate of 29 cases/100 000 population).

Signs and symptoms:

70-80% of patients develop erythema migrans (a gradually expanding rash which may have central clearing) within 3-30 days +/- fever, headache, muscle/joint pains, and fatigue. Treatment should be initiated based on symptoms alone. Please report suspect Lyme cases to the MHO on call.

If left untreated, Lyme disease has three stages

- 1) Rash
- 2) Early disseminated (multiple EM rashes +/- neurological symptoms +/- cardiac manifestations)
- 3) Late disseminated (intermittent arthritis, fatigue etc)

Testing:

Blood tests based on antibodies may be falsely negative early in infection. Consider repeat testing in patients with ongoing symptoms. Be sure to include travel history on the requisition.

Laboratory testing is performed using validated methods in an accredited laboratory. Direct any questions to BCCDC Zoonotic Diseases and Emerging Pathogens at **(604) 707-2628**.

NOTE: Physicians wishing to **test ticks** for Lyme disease are to contact the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Parasitology Laboratory at **(604) 707-2629**. Ticks are not received nor forwarded from IH Public Health (PH) Offices and patients should not be directed to PH offices with ticks.

References:

BCCDC information on Lyme disease: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/lyme-disease-borrelia-burgdorferi-infection>

Lyme disease definition and clinical information: http://www.bccdc.ca/Communicable-Disease-Control-Manual/Documents/Lyme%20Disease%20Surveillance%20Case%20definition_revised%20version_.pdf

BCCDC information on Tick paralysis: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/tick-paralysis>

BCCDC information on tick removal and testing: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/lyme-disease-borrelia-burgdorferi-infection#TickRemoval>

NOTE: Tick paralysis can be caused by a toxin released by several tick species including *Dermacentor*. 0-2 human cases are reported per year in BC – most from the Interior. Removal of the tick reverses the paralysis.

Rabies information:

Bats are the only B.C. animal species endemically infected with rabies. A bat that comes into physical contact with or bites a person may be a sick bat. When captured and submitted, 5-10% test positive for rabies; it is estimated that 1% of B.C. bats in the wild carry rabies. Human contact with a bat (bite, scratch, saliva exposure) requires urgent assessment for rabies prophylaxis.

Other animals

- Animal bites incurred by people intentionally hand-feeding squirrels, rabbits or rodents are considered provoked and do not warrant rabies prophylaxis.
- Bites by domestic pets or stray cats and dogs within B.C. do not usually necessitate rabies prophylaxis. If the circumstance of the bite or the animal behaviour was suspicious, please contact the Communicable Disease (CD) Unit or the Medical Health Officer (MHO) on-call for an assessment.
- All animal bites of IH residents occurring **outside of B.C.** should also be referred for assessment.

Contact the IH CD Unit (toll-free 1-866-778-7736) or the after-hours MHO on-call to assess for the need for rabies prophylaxis.

For more information please refer to:

BCCDC general information on rabies and management of animal contacts: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/rabies>

IH information on bats and rabies: <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/CommunicableDiseaseControl/Pages/Bats.aspx>

IH Having a Baby Website Refresh

Physicians are encouraged to direct all pregnant women to the updated [“IH Having a Baby” web page](#) . This is a one-stop spot with information and resources that help expectant mothers have a healthy pregnancy and give their babies a good start in life. New website topics include: Preparing to Have a Baby, For Dads and Partners, and Bringing Baby Home. A direct link to *Baby’s Best Chance: A Parents’ Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care* is also featured on the landing page.



Pregnant women can self-refer to the [Healthy from the Start Prenatal program](#) or you can refer directly to the program by phone at: **1-855-868-7710** or fax at: **1-250-868-7809**.

Infection Prevention and Control Newsletter (available only through the internal IH website)

Stay up to date with the Infection Prevention and Control newsletters called Infection Reflections.

For the latest edition of Infection Reflections:

<http://insidenet.interiorhealth.ca/QPS/IPC/Documents/Feb%202018.pdf>

You can also find all previous editions of the newsletter at the bottom of IPAC site: <http://insidenet.interiorhealth.ca/QPS/IPC/Pages/default.aspx>