

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fight The Bite During Tick Season

GTCHD is reminding residents about the danger of tick bites.

The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) is urging the community to take steps to prevent tick bites when enjoying the outdoors this season. Preventing tick bites is important, as the insects may carry dangerous bacteria, parasites, or viruses. Not all ticks carry diseases, but tick-related diseases like Lyme disease do occur in Michigan and can be serious or fatal if not properly diagnosed and treated.

“Lyme disease cases are on the rise not only in the state but also here in Grand Traverse County,” said GTCHD Epidemiologist Kyle Muchez, MPH. “In 2023, Michigan had 1,133 confirmed cases compared to 535 cases in 2022. Here in the county, we had two confirmed cases in 2021 compared to ten cases in 2023. It’s important to reduce your risk by following proper tick prevention strategies, especially with the potential for a longer tick season.”

There are more than 20 known [tick species in Michigan](#) and they are most commonly found in natural areas such as tall grasses, wooded areas, fields near wooded areas, and sandy soils. Prevention is the best strategy to avoid tick bites.

Some steps to take include:

- Wearing long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outside.
- Using insect repellent that contains at least 20% DEET, picaridin, or IR3535.
- Walking in the center of trails and avoiding wooded and bushy areas with high grass.
- Showering and checking body, gear, children, and pets for ticks after being outside.
- Keeping the grass in the backyard cut and removing yard debris often.

If there is a tick on the body, remove it as quickly as possible by grasping the head as close to your skin and pulling it straight out slowly. Do not squeeze the body or twist as this can force fluids back through the feeding tube. Clean the bite area and wash your hands with soap and water. If a rash or fever develops within several weeks of removing a tick, call the doctor.

“Ticks can remain active through the fall when there are several days above freezing,” said GTCHD Environmental Health Director Brent Wheat. “If you have pets, it’s also important to talk with your veterinarian about how to protect them if they spend time outside as they can be exposed to the same diseases and transport ticks into the house.”

If you find a tick, you can have it identified by submitting a photo to the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#). Ticks can also be identified by the GTCHD Environmental Health Office located at 2650 LaFranier Road in Traverse City by calling 231-995-6051 to set a time for the tick to be examined.

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