



2016 Tickborne Disease Season Advisory

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities
FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP, Commissioner and State Health Officer, WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health
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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

Tickborne diseases occur annually in West Virginia with most cases developing symptoms between April and September. Lyme disease is the most commonly reported tickborne disease in West Virginia. In 2015, 289 confirmed and probable cases were reported from 38 counties in the state compared to 143 cases reported in 2013 and 136 reported in 2014. Additionally, five counties became “Lyme disease endemic” last year (based on analysis of surveillance data) bringing the total to twelve endemic counties: Berkeley, Greenbrier Hampshire, Hancock, Jefferson, Kanawha, Mineral, Marshall, Morgan, Roane, Wetzel and Wood.

Tickborne rickettsial diseases (TBRDs), such as anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, have also been reported in the state. These diseases are characterized by acute onset of fever, headache, and myalgia. Symptoms can also include anemia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, and elevated hepatic transaminases. TBRDs can be confused with other illnesses, and serologic results are often negative during the first week of illness.

Laboratory testing is important for diagnosing tickborne diseases. For Lyme disease, a two-tiered testing approach is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): an IFA/EIA screen followed by IgG and IgM Western blots. For TBRDs, the gold standard test is IFA using pathogen-specific antigen performed on paired serum specimens (one taken during the first week of illness and another taken two to four weeks later). Doxycycline is the first line of treatment for Lyme disease and TBRDs. It should be initiated whenever any of these diseases are suspected.

Ticks are mostly active during warm months but can reappear during breaks in cold weather. It is important to remind patients to conduct tick checks on themselves (and their pets) when visiting wooded areas. The use of an insect repellent (e.g. DEET, picaridin, oil of eucalyptus) is also important in preventing tickborne diseases. Please work with your local health department to provide timely reporting of tickborne disease cases and patient information necessary for surveillance.

For more information about tickborne diseases in West Virginia, visit the Division of Infectious Disease (DIDE) website at www.dide.wv.gov. You may also contact your local health department or DIDE at (800) 423-1271 ext. 1 or (304) 558-5358, ext. 1.

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