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Dear North Reading Residents,

The Town of North Reading Health Department would like to alert residents that with Spring and Summer just a short time away, we have some suggestions for staying healthy!

As most of us are now getting back to some normalcy and getting out again for much needed fresh air, we need to be mindful that with this nicer weather comes tick and mosquito season. (See illustration below of the 2 most common ticks, very small and can be difficult to spot)



The Health Department recommends the following precautionary measures to protect residents and help reduce the chance of infection with **TICK- BORNE ILLNESSES**.

Ticks are most active during warm weather, generally late spring through fall. However, ticks can be out any time that temperatures are above freezing. Unfortunately, given the climate changes with global warming and warmer winters, ticks are becoming more prevalent year round.

Ticks cling to vegetation and are most numerous in brushy, wooded or grassy habitats. When you are outside in an area likely to have ticks (e.g. brushy, wooded or grassy places), follow these simple steps to protect yourself and your loved ones:

Prevention

- Use a repellent with DEET (the chemical N-N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) according to the instructions given on the product label. When it comes to insect repellents designed for skin application, it is recommended you use an EPA-registered spray, lotion, or liquid repellent that contains 25-30% DEET, (DEET products **should not be used** on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations less than 30% on older children.). Other options are products that contain 15% or more of Picaridin. Check the label to confirm the product's EPA approval, which guarantees up to two hours of complete protection. (Side note: Repellent lotions will take a bit longer to kick in than sprays)
- Ticks hate the smell of lemon, orange, cinnamon, lavender, peppermint, and rose geranium so they'll avoid latching on to anything that smells of those items. Any of these or a combination can be used in DIY sprays or added to almond oil and rubbed on exposed skin.

- When it comes to pesticides, Permethrin products applied to clothing/boots (not to skin), actually kill ticks that come in contact with the treated clothing, and usually stay effective through several washings. For best results, choose a permethrin insecticide spray that's safe to apply to the surfaces and plants you want to target.
- Consider spraying your yard for ticks. It is always advised to make your application either in the **early morning or early evening time**. You don't ever want to make an application of insecticide or herbicide during midday when the sun is at its hottest
- Wear long, light-colored pants tucked into your socks or boots, and a long-sleeved shirt. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep ticks away from your skin and help you spot a tick on your clothing faster.
- Stay on cleared trails when walking or hiking, avoiding the edge habitat where ticks are likely to be.
- Talk to your veterinarian about tick control options (tick collars, repellents, oral medications) for your pets(consider year round treatment).
- Check yourself for ticks once a day. Favorite places ticks like to go on your body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears. Remember to check your children and pets, too. Remove any attached tick as soon as possible.

Symptoms

Tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI), Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF), ehrlichiosis and tularemia can cause distinctive rashes, commonly referred to as a “bullseye” rash. Other common symptoms are **headache, fatigue, and muscle aches**. People with Lyme disease may also have joint pains, fevers or other symptoms.

The Health Department recommends the following precautionary measures to protect residents and their families and reduce the chance of infection from **MOSQUITO BORNE ILLNESSES**

Prevention

- Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning
- If you are outdoors at any time and notice mosquitoes around you, take steps to avoid being bitten by moving indoors, covering up and/or wearing repellent.

- Clothing can help reduce mosquito bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- Use a repellent with DEET or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products **should not be used** on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30 percent or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and **should not be applied** to skin.
- Mosquito-Proof Your Home by draining standing water such as rain gutters, drains, unused flower pots, wading pools and change birdbath water regularly – Many mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water.
- Install or Repair Screens - Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.
- Mosquitoes are turned off by several natural scents: **cinnamon, peppermint, cedar, citronella, lemongrass, patchouli, catnip, lavender**, and more. Find a favorite, and use it when you want to spend time outside. Lemon eucalyptus oil is one of the more well-known natural repellents and is approved by The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as an effective ingredient in mosquito repellent

Mosquito related diseases

EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis)

West Nile Virus (WNV)

Zika virus

Chikungunya virus

For further information on Lyme disease

https://www.mass.gov/service-details/lyme-disease?_ga=2.223659419.1486604743.1586517454-2035369805.1579205719

For further information on WNV, EEE, or ZIKA

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-arbovirus-update#:~:text=MDPH%20has%20identified%20five%20EEE,been%20increased%20in%20these%20regions.>

Residents with questions about mosquitoes or how to control them can contact either Mr. Robert F. Bracey, Director of Public Health or Ms. Pam Merrill, RN,BSN at the Town of North Reading Health Department 978-357-5242 or visit the Town Health Department web site at www.northreadingma.gov/health-department or the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project at 781-893-5759 or at the Project web site at <https://sudbury.ma.us/emmcp/>.

