



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

Contact: Beth Ann Hamilton, MS
Communications Coordinator
Washtenaw County Health Department
hamiltone@washtenaw.org
734-294-4301

It's Tick and Mosquito Season – Time to Fight the Bite!

Lyme disease cases are on the rise in Washtenaw County; stay healthy by preventing bites

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 18, 2024 – The Washtenaw County Health Department is reminding residents to [take steps](#) to prevent tick and mosquito bites when enjoying the outdoors. Preventing tick bites is especially important as local cases of Lyme disease have increased dramatically in recent years, and many of these cases were exposed here in Washtenaw County.

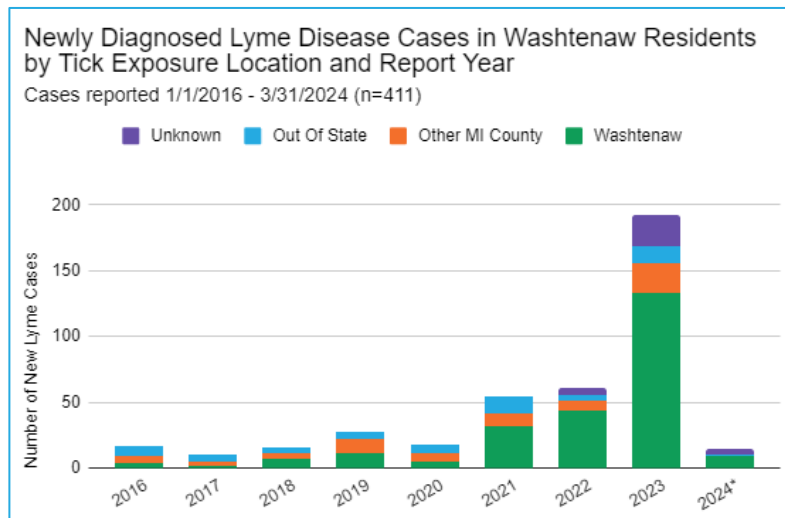
“In 2020, we had 5 Lyme disease cases in Washtenaw residents who were likely exposed from a tick bite here in our county. In 2023, that number jumped to 133,” says Laura Bauman, MPH, epidemiology program manager. “Anyone spending time outside in our community can be exposed to Lyme disease. This makes it especially important to prevent bites.”

The best way to avoid mosquito- and tick-borne illnesses is to prevent bites. If any community member finds a tick attached to their body, they should remove it right away and monitor their health. If any symptoms like a fever, rash, or muscle or joint aches develop, contact a medical provider immediately.

Local data on mosquito and tick related illnesses

Lyme disease is the most reported vector-borne disease in the United States. There were 192 cases of Lyme in Washtenaw County residents in 2023 and 133 of these cases were likely exposed to the Lyme bacteria in Washtenaw County.

Lyme disease can be serious: over 10% of Washtenaw individuals diagnosed with Lyme in 2023 were hospitalized with severe illness, including meningitis and heart issues.



Washtenaw County Health Department
555 Towner Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: 734-544-6700 • Fax: 734-544-6705
washtenaw.org/health



Environmental Health Division
705 N Zeeb Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: 734-222-3800 • Fax: 734-222-3930
washtenaw.org/envhealth

“One concern is that Black and Hispanic/Latinx residents are extremely underrepresented in our local Lyme data,” says Bauman. “In 2023, there were 0 cases in individuals that identified as Black or African American, and only 3 in individuals that identified as Hispanic or Latino. This is concerning because it could mean diagnoses are being delayed or missed altogether.”

There hasn’t been a West Nile virus case reported in Washtenaw since 2018. Washtenaw had a case of Jamestown Canyon virus encephalitis in 2022. In 2023, we did identify West Nile virus and Jamestown Canyon virus in local mosquitoes, but there were no human cases. Michigan experienced Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) activity from 2020-2023 but Washtenaw did not have any cases.

Additional vector-borne disease data is available on our [Communicable Disease Data page](#). More detailed Lyme disease data is on our [Lyme and Ticks page](#).

Tracking local mosquitoes and ticks

The Health Department is participating in the Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance Program again this year, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). The Health Department will collect and identify mosquitoes and ticks to help understand local disease risk and contribute data to the statewide tracking system.

Staff will be conducting “tick drags” in several locations to collect ticks for identification and Lyme disease testing. Ticks of interest include deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*, also known as the blacklegged tick), which can spread Lyme and other diseases.

Later in May, Health Department staff will set up mosquito traps throughout the county. Mosquitoes of interest include *Aedes aegypti*, *Aedes albopictus*, *Culiseta melanura* and *Coquillettidia perturbans*, which can transmit Zika and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus, as well as other diseases. Mosquito traps will have Health Department signage. Residents are asked to please not disturb any traps found in the community.

Preventing tick and mosquito bites

The Washtenaw County Health Department recommends the following precautions to prevent disease transmission from ticks and mosquitoes.

Tick bite prevention tips:

- Check for ticks after being outside. Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held mirror, if necessary. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in the hair.

*Lyme disease cases are **increasing** in Washtenaw County.*

PREVENT TICK BITES + ILLNESS:

- ✓ Shower and check your body, gear, children, and pets for ticks after being outside
- ✓ Use insect repellent with DEET and/or permethrin
- ✓ Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outside
- ✓ Walk in the center of trails and avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass or leaf litter

If you find a tick attached to you, remove it as quickly as possible:

1. Use tweezers to grasp the head close to the skin.
2. Pull gently. Do not twist.
3. After removing the tick, wash your hands and the bite.

If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your doctor.



- Use insect repellent with 20% or more DEET or [other ingredients](#) shown to be effective against ticks, and follow label instructions.
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. Walk in the center of trails.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming inside from outdoor activities.
- Examine gear and pets for ticks. Ticks can also attach to dogs and cats – do tick checks on pets regularly and talk with your veterinarian about tick prevention.

Mosquito bite prevention tips:

- Use insect repellent and follow label instructions. To find a repellent that's right for you, use the Environmental Protection Agency's [insect repellent search tool](#).
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Repair screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Reduce mosquito breeding conditions by getting rid of standing water around your home. Once a week, empty flowerpots, barrels, and other items that can hold water.

Tick identification and what to do if you find a tick on your body

To remove a tick, use tweezers and grip the body firmly and pull straight out of the skin. Do not twist the tick. After removing the tick, clean the bite area and your hands. Your risk for Lyme disease is very low if a tick has been attached for fewer than 24 hours. You do not need to keep the tick for testing. Dispose of it by flushing down the toilet.

MDHHS offers tick identification based on photos at no charge for Michigan residents. To submit a photo of a tick for identification, email the photo to MDHHS-Bugs@michigan.gov according to the instructions at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

MDHHS does not offer tick testing because the results do not predict infection. Instead, MDHHS suggests that if bitten by a tick, individuals should monitor for symptoms such as rash, fatigue, fever, headache, muscle pain, or joint swelling/pain occurring within 30 days of the latest tick bite and/or visiting an area with ticks. Individuals should seek prompt medical attention if illness occurs.

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at www.washtenaw.org/health. The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpubhealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.