

Lyme disease in the workplace



Lyme disease is on the rise in Quebec and presents an occupational health risk for outdoor workers

Find out how to protect your workers

Stay informed,
stay healthy!



Recommendations for employers

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is an infection that occurs following the bite from a tick that carries a specific bacterium.



Tick removal from the skin within **24 hours** following a bite greatly reduces the risk of acquiring the disease.

Symptoms

One or more of the following symptoms may appear following the bite from an infected tick :



The most common symptom, usually appearing 3-30 days after the bite, is an expanding, circular **skin rash** around the bite site. It can be homogeneous or bull's-eye-shaped. The rash expands rapidly (>5 cm, or about 2 in.) and persists for **over 48 hours**, with little or no pain or itching.

Fatigue, fever, headaches, and body aches may also occur.

If left untreated, other symptoms may appear in the weeks to months following the bite, namely:

- Multiple, expanding skin rashes elsewhere on the body
- Body pain, especially in the neck
- Swelling in one or more joints (ex. knee)
- Facial palsy or numbness in a limb
- Chest pain, palpitations and/or dizziness

Treatment

Antibiotics are an effective treatment for Lyme disease if infection is detected and treated in a timely manner.



Warning

In-house, commercial tests to detect bacteria in ticks are not recommended.



For more information, visit: www.quebec.ca/Lyme [available in French and English]

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Institut national de santé publique

Québec



High-risk areas

It is possible to acquire Lyme disease anywhere in the province of Québec, but especially in high-risk areas where ticks carrying the bacteria are established, including:



- Northern and Western **Estrie**;
- Most of **Montérégie**;
- Southwestern **Mauricie-et-Centre-du-Québec**;
- Southwestern **Outaouais**.

High-risk environments

Be on the lookout when you see...

Woodland and forests



Tall grass and bushes



Leaf litter



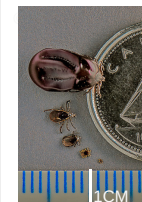
Gardens

Tick activity period



Ticks are active whenever ambient temperature reaches **4°C**, in areas without any snow cover.

Characteristics of a tick



- Has 8 legs (in nymphal and adult stages);
- Reaches 1 - 3 mm in size (before feeding);
- Does not jump, fly or drop down from trees;
- Awaits in low vegetation for an animal or human to brush up against it;
- Grabs its prey when in direct contact.

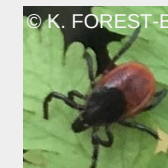
Photo: *Ixodes scapularis* ticks at all different life stages: larva, nymph, adult male and adult female (before and after blood meal).

Did you know?

Nearly a dozen different tick species have been recorded in Québec.

Tick bites are usually painless and often go unnoticed.

Ixodes scapularis, also known as the blacklegged tick or deer tick, is the only species in Québec that can transmit Lyme disease. However, not all ticks of this species carry the bacteria.



Québec

Québec

How should employers protect their workers?

➔ Minimize worker exposure during activities in high-risk environment, and inform them appropriately about the disease and preventive measures.

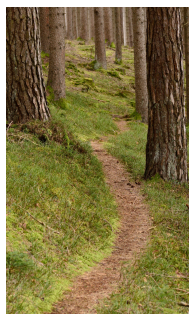
➔ Establish a procedure in the event of a tick bite

Minimizing exposure

1 Establish safe areas between high-risk environments and workplaces:

Landscaping: use mulch or gravel to create a buffer around wooded areas;

Maintenance: remove leaf litter; mow or cut back tall grass and undergrowth;



2 When possible, encourage workers to stay in the center of trails, and have them avoid working at sites with woods, bushes, tall grass, and leaf litter.

3 Adapt work clothes to protect workers adequately. Workers should wear:

- light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants (which make spotting ticks easier);
- long socks and closed shoes;
- hat, when possible.



4 Provide workers with insect repellent, containing:

- Icaridine (20% or less), OR;
- DEET (30% or less).

To be applied on exposed body parts, closely following instructions.



What type of workers are at risk?

All outdoor workers in contact with high-risk environments are potentially at risk.



Inform

Provide information on:

- Lyme disease;
- Occupational risks;
- Preventive measures.



An information pamphlet designed for workers can be provided by the public health unit in your area.

Provide training

Provide first aid training about:

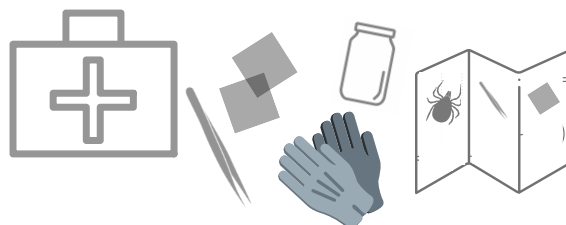
- Tick removal;
- Disinfection.



➔ Additional measures

First aid kit should always contain:

- fine-tipped tweezers;
- antiseptic swabs;
- medical gloves;
- airtight container;
- information pamphlet on proper tick removal.



In the event of tick bite...

1 Remove tick as soon as possible using fine-tipped tweezers;



2 Keep the tick in the refrigerator, in a labelled and well-sealed container, to provide to a physician during consultation if symptoms develop.



3 Call **Info-Santé 8-1-1** to know what the following steps are (free services, in French or in English)



4 Report the event in the "accidents, incidents and first aid" registry.



+ Remind workers of the importance of thoroughly inspecting body, clothing and equipment after each high-risk activity:

✓ Put work clothes in the dryer at high heat to remove and kill ticks:

- **10 minutes** for **dry** clothes;
- **60 minutes** for **damp or wet** clothes.

✓ Take a shower as soon as possible after activity to:

- dislodge unattached ticks;
- perform a thorough body check.

