



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Taking Caution Against Ticks

PATTY RITCHIE July 7, 2014

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Did you know that Lyme disease can be caused by an insect as small as a poppy seed? Lyme disease, an infection caused by a bacteria spread by the bite on an infected tick is particularly prevalent in our area of the state—and that's why we need to take extra caution to protect ourselves from this serious risk.

So far this year, in New York State alone, more than 450 new cases of Lyme disease have been reported. In addition, the CDC now estimates that there are 300,000 cases of Lyme disease annually, with a majority being centered in the northeast. Because of this increase, I've been working to stop the spread of Lyme disease. Recently, legislation I sponsored to create the 21st Century Workgroup for the Disease Elimination and Reduction received final passage. The group, comprised of experts in diseases, infection and public health, will be tasked with pushing for the development of effective vaccines against diseases, including Lyme. Included in the new State Budget is \$100,000, which I secured to fund the new workgroup.

Ticks are most active from April through November and are commonly found in wooded areas and grasslands. They're also often seen in lawns and gardens that are on the edge of forests. Pets that spend a great deal of time outdoors can also carry ticks, so it's always a good idea to check your dog or cat for ticks before it reenters your home. While there's no way to fully protect yourself from Lyme disease and the insects that carry it, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk:

- When outdoors, stay on the center of trails or pathways and try not to brush against vegetation;
- To prevent ticks from making contact with your skin, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts;

- Wear light colored and tightly woven clothing—this will make it easier to spot ticks;
- Check yourself regularly for ticks, paying special attention to the backs of knees, behind the ears, your scalp, armpits and back;
- If you find a tick on your skin, don't panic. Use a pair of pointed tweezers to grasp the tick by the head or mouth—not by the body—and pull firmly and steadily outward. Be sure to wash your hands immediately to prevent secondary infection;
- If you've been bitten, monitor the site of the bite for the next month. If a rash appears or you develop flu-like symptoms, be sure to contact your health care provider immediately.

When it's summertime, everyone wants to enjoy the outdoors. In the months to come, when you and your loved ones are outside, be sure to take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from insects and the diseases they carry.