

Poison Prevention Press

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A Closer Look at Lyme disease

According to the CDC, 95% of confirmed Lyme disease cases in 2015 were reported from 14 states. Maryland was one of the 14 states.

Typical symptoms are: fever, headache, tiredness. The classic "bull's-eye" skin rash may or may not be present. Diagnosis is confirmed with a blood test.

Most cases of Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. If left untreated, the infection can spread to the joints, heart and nervous system.

The CDC does not recommend testing ticks because

- you will likely develop symptoms before the test comes back
- just because the tick contains the organism, it doesn't mean you have been infected
- negative results can be misleading...you may have also been bitten by a different tick that you didn't find.

More Info: www.cdc.gov/Lyme

Did you know that...

- In 2015, there were 1,727 confirmed cases of Lyme disease reported to the state health department.
- In 2016, the MPC managed 327 cases involving a bite or sting.

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Bites and Stings

As the temperatures get warmer, we begin to spend more time outside. Warmer weather also means insects and snakes start to appear. Let's review the critters we should be aware of in Maryland.

Maryland is home to two venomous snakes...the Timber Rattlesnake and the Northern Copperhead. Not all bites from these snakes will result in the injection of venom; we call this a dry bite. With dry bites, the puncture wounds will be visible, but no symptoms develop. Pain, redness and progressive swelling are signs venom was injected. Even non-venomous snakes have teeth and will bite. Proper first aid and a tetanus update are required. If a snakebite occurs, remain calm and contact the Maryland Poison Center. The experts will ask questions that will help determine if the person needs additional medical treatment. Note, we do not recommend using a tourniquet or trying to remove the venom by cutting and sucking.

One poisonous spider makes its home in Maryland. The Black Widow has a round, glossy black abdomen with a red hourglass on the underside. They are usually found in dark, quiet places like woodpiles. The bite may be painless or painful with redness and warmth at the site. Additional symptoms may start within two hours of the bite include muscle pain and cramps. Keep in mind that the Black Widow is usually not a deadly spider. It gets its name because sometimes the female kills and eats the male black widow after mating. Because the Brown Recluse spider does not have a breeding population in Maryland, bites from this spider are uncommon. This small brown spider can fit on a quarter. There is a dark violin-shaped marking on its back. As the name implies, this spider is not aggressive and is found in quiet places. Symptoms are usually limited to the site of the bite. They include pain, redness, and a "bull's eye" appearance that may progress to an ulcer. Other spiders will bite and cause local reactions and become infected, but they are not poisonous.

In Maryland, bites from ticks can result in Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever. A relatively mild winter allows the adult ticks to be more active. It is best to remove ticks by using tweezers. Grasp the tick close to the skin and pull gently upward. Record the tick bite on a calendar and contact your doctor if flu-like symptoms or a rash develops a few days to weeks after. The deer tick which causes Lyme disease is about the size of the period at the end of this sentence. Very close examination of the skin and hair is required to find one. Wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when spending time in areas that may have ticks. Use insect repellents also, being sure to follow the label directions exactly.

Jellyfish stings can be quite painful. If stung by a jellyfish, immediately wash the area with seawater. Scrape the skin with a blunt edge like a credit card to remove any remaining tentacles. Wash again with seawater. You can apply a paste of baking soda and water to relieve the itching. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain. Remember even a dead jellyfish lying on the sand can sting, so avoid touching the jellyfish that wash up on the beach.

For more information on bites and stings, contact the Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

