

Editor of the Reformer:

I am writing in regards to the article “New map pinpoints Lyme disease risk areas around Eastern U.S.” As a Lyme specialist in southern Vermont, I applaud your report on the new study, which highlights the fact that New Englanders are at risk for Lyme disease. It is important to note that less than half of those with Lyme disease remember a tick bite; less than half identify the classic bull’s eye rash. Since we have had an unusually warm winter with little snow, ticks have been more active this winter. Prevention is essential. Daily tick checks for those in tick country are imperative. Removal should be prompt. Pressing the body of the tick should be avoided in doing so. Symptoms of Lyme disease may include, but are not limited to: flu-like symptoms, joint pain or swelling, muscle pain, numbness or tingling, facial palsy, brain fog. It is best treated early.

Having reviewed the original article “Human Risk of Infection with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the Lyme disease agent, in Eastern United States” from the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, I have a few comments. The study reflects that ticks are more prevalent in lower altitudes, highly forested areas, and may be deterred by areas with lower winter temperatures. On page 325, it states: “Our results indicate that the presence of any number of infected nymphs may be considered sufficient to recommend post exposure prophylaxis. Infected nymphs were found in 92.3% of the sites where a threshold of 14 nymphs per 1,000 meters squared were collected.” The standard recommendation is to provide prophylactic treatment for a tick bite to those in an area with an infection prevalence of greater than 20%. It is important to note that the authors of this study suggest prophylactic treatment to those in areas with any evidence of infected ticks is prudent.

On this February day as I look out the window into the warm sun and over the bare meadow, I also wonder how these statistics may have changed since 2007. Today, I will enjoy a hike outdoors and remember a tick check after brushing my teeth tonight.

Sincerely,

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