



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Taking Caution During Tick Season

PATTY RITCHIE May 24, 2015

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

As summer approaches, the warmer weather gives us countless reasons to get outside and enjoy the sunshine. While the fresh air certainly has its perks, it's important to be extra vigilant to stay protected from ticks and the diseases they carry, namely Lyme disease. May marks Lyme disease Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and spread information about this terrible disease.

A potentially debilitating and life-threatening illness, it's estimated by the state Department of Health that more than 95,000 cases of Lyme have been confirmed in New York State since 1986. While the disease has been reported in every region of the state, in the region I represent, cases of Lyme have jumped significantly in recent years, from eight in 1999, to 312 in 2013. Typical symptoms of Lyme disease include headache, fatigue, fever and a red, circular rash. If left untreated, the infection has the potential to spread to the heart, nervous system and joints. However, most cases can be treated successfully through the use of antibiotics. To protect yourself and your loved ones from Lyme disease, follow the below steps:

***Avoid places where ticks are prevalent:*** Steer clear of wooded areas with high grass and, if you're in wooded areas try to walk in the center of trails.

***Wear insect repellent and dress accordingly:*** If you're planning on being outdoors, be sure to apply insect repellent and try to wear long sleeves and pants to protect yourself from ticks.

***Check yourself, your children and pets for insects:*** When coming in from outside, be sure to bathe or shower as soon as possible—and don't forget to check for ticks. Make sure to check your clothing and gear as well, and be sure to toss clothes in the dryer for an hour on high heat to kill any ticks you may have missed.

***If you find a tick, remove it safely:*** Spot a tick? Gently grasp it using tweezers near its mouth or head. Pull it away from your body steadily, without squeezing or crushing it and dispose of the insect. Be sure to thoroughly clean the bite area, as well as your hands and then apply antiseptic to the area where you were bitten.

***Call your doctor:*** If you notice any signs of Lyme disease—including fatigue, headache, fever or a rash—call your doctor immediately.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to be named to the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, a group that aims to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and other related illnesses. This year, the new State Budget included \$600,000 to help implement recommendations made by the Task Force to help better protect the health of people in our local communities and across the state.

Whether you're hitting hiking trails, playing outside with the kids, camping or working out in the garden, I hope you'll take the time to protect yourself and your loved ones from Lyme disease. For more information and prevention tips, click the following links:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[New York State Department of Health](#)