



**April 2016**

**RE: Lyme Disease Awareness**

Dear Principals, Staff, Parents, Guardians, and Students:

It's a great time of year to enjoy the outdoors, but we need to be aware and careful in areas where there may be blacklegged ticks (also called deer ticks). These are very small ticks - sometimes as small as the period at the end of this sentence. They can carry the germ that causes a bacterial infection called Lyme disease. Deer ticks are found across Nova Scotia - so please share this letter with teachers, staff, students, parents and guardians.

Follow these steps to help protect against ticks, especially in grassy, wooded or shrub covered areas:

- Apply insect repellents containing DEET or Icaridin to exposed skin and clothes. Follow directions on the package carefully.
- Wear light colored long sleeved shirts and pants, closed-toed shoes, and tuck shirts into pants, and pant legs into socks.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Put playground equipment in sunny, dry places away from wooded areas, yard edges, and trees.
- Check your whole body for ticks and, when possible, take a bath or shower within two hours of coming indoors. This makes it easier to find ticks and washes away loose ones.
- If you find ticks, here's how to remove them safely:
  - Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
  - Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.
  - Clean and disinfect the site with soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide.
  - Dispose of the tick in a sealed plastic bag and put in the garbage.
  - Do NOT burn, squeeze or coax a tick's mouthparts from your skin using other methods.

The first symptom of Lyme disease is usually a rash that may look like a bull's eye target near the tick bite. The rash can appear anywhere from 3-30 days after the bite. Symptoms such as fever, headache, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in the joints and general body aches and pains may develop. Symptoms may appear over a period of months. If symptoms appear, it is very important to contact a health care provider. Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics

To access a great educational video for kids about how to protect against tick bites, and to learn more about Lyme disease and blacklegged ticks, visit <http://www.novascotia.ca/hpp/cdpc/lyme.asp> - or call your local Public Health office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Dutt".

Dr. Monika Dutt, MPH, MD, CCFP, FRCPC

Medical Officer of Health

Cape Breton, Antigonish, Guysborough Area