



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

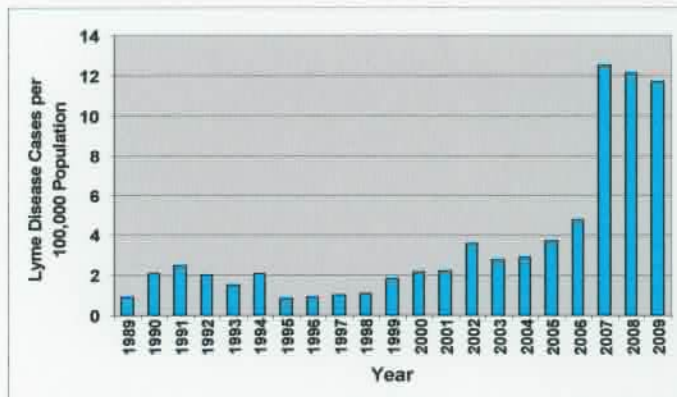
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May 6, 2010

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to let you know about Virginia's upsurge in Lyme disease cases and to share some resources. As we move forward into another spring, it is important to remember that ticks become more active with warmer weather, increasing the risk of tick-borne disease in your patients. While several types of tick-borne disease (including Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasmosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever) are found here, **Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infection reported in Virginia.**

Since 2000, VDH has witnessed a steady increase in the number of newly identified Lyme disease cases. In 2007, Lyme disease increased dramatically and has remained high since that time. This increase has followed a pattern of progressive geographic spread of Lyme activity southward and westward from northern regions of the state, part of an overall expansion in the eastern United States. Most cases occur during the late spring and early summer with illness onset most likely to occur in June, July and August.



This expansion of Lyme disease in Virginia has created an increase in public interest and concern. Virginians in some areas of the Commonwealth have worked with their elected officials to sponsor legislative proposals and community town hall meetings to address some of their concerns. No Lyme disease legislative proposals were enacted into law this year though several were proposed. The Virginia Department of Health is actively working with these efforts to provide sound scientific information to help inform public knowledge. Your local health director (contact information is at www.vdh.virginia.gov) is able to update you on local community town hall meetings.

Particularly throughout this spring and summer, I encourage you to maintain a heightened vigilance for detecting Lyme disease in your patients. **Common symptoms of Lyme disease include the following:**

- **Fever, headache**
- **Malaise, fatigue**
- **Erythema migrans skin lesion (“bull’s-eye rash”)**
- **Myalgia, migratory arthralgias**
- **Stiff neck.**



Lyme disease is a preventable illness. Please encourage your patients to follow those practices that will decrease their risk of acquiring Lyme disease such as proper clothing when outdoors, use of repellants, and prompt removal of ticks. For more information on Lyme disease in Virginia, you can review a presentation titled, “Lyme Disease Tracking and Prevention in Virginia” at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DEE/Vectorborne/HCPs>.

As always, be sure to report Lyme disease to your local health department. Your reporting is critical as it allows us to track the ongoing spread of this infection throughout Virginia. Thank you for all you are doing to keep Virginians healthy and active during this beautiful time of year!

Sincerely,



Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP