

It's Spring & Clock Is Tick-ing; Be Aware Of Those Little Guys

(This article was composed by members of the Barnstable County Lyme/Tick Borne Disease Task Force, which has the primary mission of preventing tick-borne diseases in the county.)

Spring is finally arriving and once again we are reminded that certain opportunistic creatures will be waiting for us outdoors—the ticks. May is designated as Lyme Disease Awareness Month and it is important to focus on the reality that in addition

County REPORT

to Lyme disease, other diseases transmitted by ticks through their bites are being detected and reported in greater numbers. Caution throughout the year is prudent, but this month we should focus on the issue.

It is important to understand that Lyme is the most under-reported carrier-borne disease in this country today. And in Massachusetts, two other diseases carried by ticks—Babesiosis and Anaplasmosis—are on the increase and have caused some deaths.

The symptoms of the most common tick-borne diseases are provided in the chart accompanying this article. Clip it out and post it! While some of the symptoms may be enough for your physician to prescribe treatment, blood tests also might be ordered to help with the diagnosis. Unfortunately, a definitive blood test has not yet been developed and a negative result, particularly for Lyme, does not always confirm that you are free from infection.

We can probably all relate to someone who has had an encounter with a tick, but this is a good time to recall some of the specifics to help motivate our preventive strategies and avoid becoming another chilling statistic. While many associate Lyme with

the expanding “bullseye” rash, fully as many as 40 percent of Lyme patients never develop this particular symptom and many never even recognize that they were bitten by a tick. This may be due to the fact is that the immature tick is no bigger than a poppy seed and can easily go undetected.

Deer populations often are blamed for causing Lyme and the other tick-borne illnesses, but Bambi and his relatives are only part of the cycle. Mice, voles, chipmunks and shrews all are potential carriers. And when a tick drops off one of them and onto the ground, it is happy to hitchhike onto any warm blooded animal, including humans. Yes, you and I make a pretty good substitute and they don't discriminate.

Now is a good time to review safety measures for being outdoors—wear light clothing, tuck your trousers inside your socks and shirts inside trousers and inspect yourself after being outdoors. Permethrin spray is a good repellent option for clothing. Pre-treated clothing also is available.

Finally, should you find a tick embedded, carefully remove it without squeezing, utilizing fine-tipped tweezers. Also consult your physician if symptoms present themselves.

A free limited testing of ticks for the diseases is made possible through a grant obtained for towns in Barnstable County. Directions for submission of ticks can be found at tickreport.com. And, for questions, Barnstable County has a resident tick expert named Larry Dapsis, reachable at 508-375-6642.

There's no need for panic. Enjoy the outdoors. But be aware of what's out there as well.

COMMON TICKS AND THE DISEASES THEY CARRY



Blacklegged Tick

“Deer Tick”

Ixodes scapularis

Lyme disease; Anaplasmosis; Babesiosis; Powassan encephalitis



American Dog Tick

“Wood Tick”

Dermacentor variabilis

Tularemia; Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever



Lone Star Tick

Amblyomma americanum

Ehrlichiosis; Tularemia; STARI—Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness; May trigger red meat allergy

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Lyme disease: flu-like achiness: headache, fever, red expanding rash, stiff neck, joint pain, unrelenting fatigue, memory problems.
- Anaplasmosis: fever, chills, head-ache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough.
- Babesiosis: fever, chills, head-ache, heavy sweats, nausea, overwhelming weakness and fatigue.

Diagnoses can be difficult. Blood tests may be helpful; clinical diagnoses are important.

A tick can be tested for the presence of these microbes. Contact Barnstable County Entomologist Larry Dapsis at 508-375-6642.

www.capecodextension.org

Prepared by Barnstable County Lyme–Tickborne Diseases Task Force, 2014

www.tickcounter.org; www.mass.gov/dph; www.cdc.gov

‘Check And Protect’ A Good Motto For Safety Under The Summer Sun



By Gerald Tanguilig, M.D.

After a long and snowy winter, I'm happy to write about two of my favorite topics: sun exposure and eye protection.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology has designated May as Healthy Vision and UV Safety Month as a reminder to schedule your annual eye exam and to keep

your eyes protected from injury.

Eye protection comes in the form of safety glasses and sun protection. Safety glasses are especially important this time of year. Every spring, as surely as the robins and ospreys return, I get a flock of patients with gardening injuries to the eyes. Please wear your protective eyewear, even if you're just pulling weeds!

UV safety is the other important reminder for eye health. Sun exposure is associated with several eye conditions, including skin cancer on the eyelids, cataracts, and macular degeneration. We should protect our eyes as diligently as we protect our skin from the harmful rays of the sun. Here are some tips:

Wear your hat and sunglasses whenever you go outside;

Choose sunglasses that offer 100 percent UV protection. The styles that wrap around your temples are the most protective. The color, darkness, and cost of

your shades are less important;

Protect your eyes particularly during the peak hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Being on the water or in higher altitudes also increases risk;

Wear sunglasses even if you use contact lenses or have cataract lens implants with UV protection;

Keep your eyes protected even on cloudy days as UV light penetrates the clouds;

And don't forget the kids. Because UV damage is cumulative, get your children used to wearing hats and sunglasses early.

Now, sunny days will also bring one other thing to the Cape: complaints that the days are too hot. But

since this won't affect the eyes directly, bring it on!

Just don't forget those sunglasses.

(Dr. Tanguilig is a partner at Eye Health Services in Yarmouth, Sandwich, and Plymouth, surgeon at Cape Cod Eye Laser and Surgical Center in Sandwich, and is on staff at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Cape Cod Hospital.)

The Eyes HAVE IT

Do you know anyone with a brain injury ?

A brain injury includes:

- stroke
- brain tumor
- traumatic brain injury
- aneurysm
- near-drowning

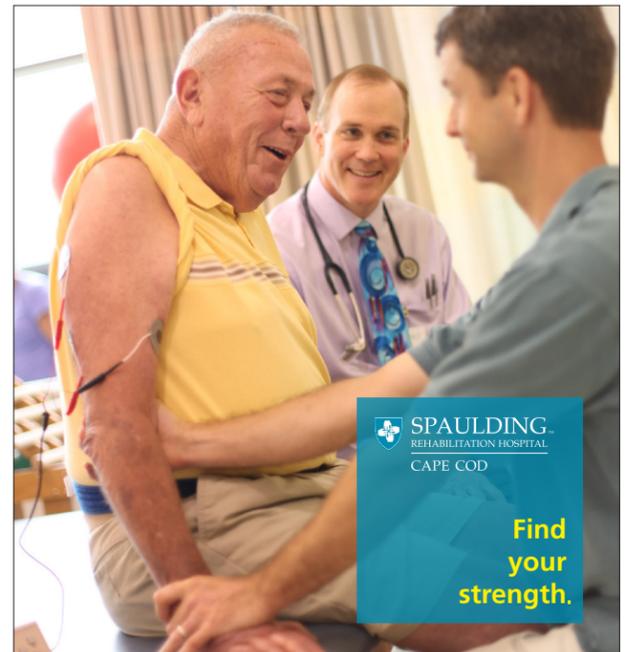
Some symptoms of brain injury may include difficulty with memory, concentration, decision-making, paying attention, and fatigue.

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) was created to help survivors of brain injury navigate through their challenges, provide educational resources, find services, and make new friends. Contact us to find information about brain injury and a listing of support groups that provide social interaction and recreational activities for survivors and caregivers within our brain injury community.



Contact: 508-743-0333 email: biamase@biama.org www.biama.org

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