



Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
**Division of Disease Control**

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Health Commissioner

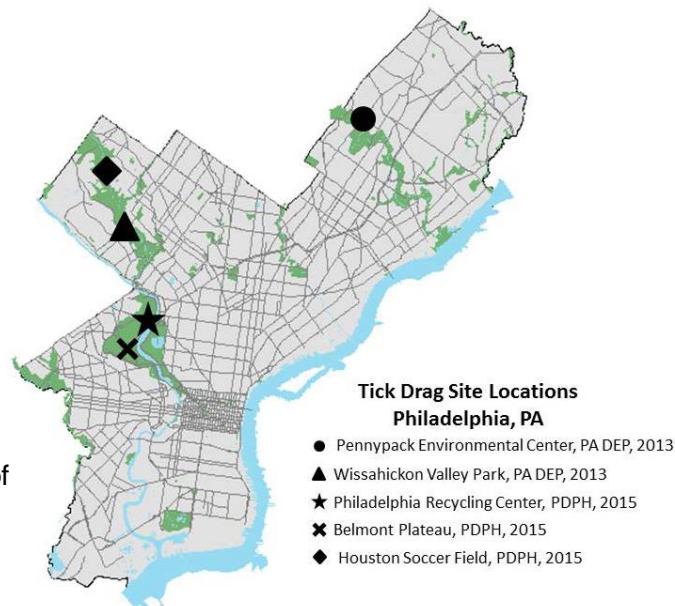
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## Health Advisory

### Tickborne Diseases in Philadelphia: Resources for the 2016 Season

June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016

As temperatures warm and tick activity increases in the Philadelphia-region, the frequency of tickborne infections diagnosed in City residents also increases. While Lyme disease is the most frequently diagnosed tickborne illness diagnosed in Philadelphia residents, cases of babesiosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) are reported every year. Moreover, blacklegged ticks collected from City parks (Figure) by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) in 2013 and Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) in 2015 demonstrate the potential for local transmission of these pathogens. Overall, 39.7% of the ticks from Philadelphia were positive for Lyme disease, which is only slightly lower than the statewide rate (47.4%). Infection with babesiosis or anaplasmosis was detected in 4.8% and 6.3% of the ticks from Philadelphia, respectively. Nearly 12% of the ticks tested positive for more than one pathogen, highlighting the need to test patients for multiple illnesses if tickborne transmission is suspected.



#### Recognition, Diagnosis, and Reporting of Tickborne Illnesses

Patients presenting with non-specific symptoms, including fever, fatigue, and lymphadenopathy, should be evaluated for tickborne illnesses during months of increased tick activity (April–October). Laboratory testing is a critical component of diagnosing tickborne illnesses, and should be ordered for symptomatic patients suspected of having exposure to ticks or tick habitats. **Your assistance with case identification and reporting increases understanding of the burden of illness from tickborne diseases in Philadelphia and helps direct prevention efforts.** Please remember to report all suspected or confirmed cases of babesiosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, RMSF, and Lyme disease (including clinically-diagnosed erythema migrans) within 5 days to PDPH by telephone at (215) 685-6748 or fax at (215) 238-6947.

#### Tick Bite Prevention

As warm weather ushers in the unofficial start of summer, providers must consider the potential for tickborne infections and the importance of discussing the following tick bite prevention tips with patients.

- Avoid ticks by walking in the center of trails and staying away from wooded or brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Wear insect repellent that contains DEET ( $\geq 20\%$ ) or an EPA-approved natural repellent and reapply as directed. Wearing clothing and gear that has been treated with permethrin will also help repel ticks.
- Conduct a full-body tick check and shower within two hours of returning indoors. Remove attached ticks with fine-tipped tweezers.
- Place clothes in a dryer on high heat for 5-10 minutes to kill ticks.
- Check pets for ticks daily, especially after spending time outdoors, and use tick repellent products.

#### Provider Resources

- On May 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, CDC hosted a webinar titled “Little Bite, Big Disease: Recognizing and Managing Tickborne Illnesses” with free CME credit - [http://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2016/callinfo\\_052416.asp](http://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2016/callinfo_052416.asp)
- Tickborne diseases of the United States. *A Reference Manual for Health Care Providers* – Also a mobile app! <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/resources/tickbornediseases.pdf>
- Order free patient-focused tickborne disease education materials from CDC <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/pubs/CDCInfoOnDemand.aspx?ProgramID=148>
- Philadelphia-specific tickborne disease surveillance updates are available on PDPH's Health Information Portal <https://hip.phila.gov/DataReports/TickborneDiseases>

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