

August 13, 2025

Attention: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Hospitals - Emergency Rooms / Infection Control/
Occupational Health, Walk-In Clinics
RE: Clinical Signs of Lyme Disease

As summer progresses, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Northumberland, Peterborough Health Unit is observing the expected seasonal uptick in Lyme disease cases across our region. This annual trend correlates with increased outdoor activity and heightened exposure to blacklegged ticks, which are known carriers of *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium responsible for Lyme disease. Given the expanding geographic range of tick populations and the ongoing public health implications, we are encouraging all healthcare providers to remain vigilant in recognizing early signs and symptoms, including those without an erythema migrans (EM) rash.

Although the majority of infected clients will develop an EM rash, a significant number of clients will not. A thorough clinical assessment of nonspecific signs and symptoms, combined with a detailed patient history—including recent outdoor activity, potential exposure in known endemic areas of Ontario, and contact with pets that may have frequented wooded or grassy environments—is recommended to evaluate the patient's risk for Lyme disease.

The following are resources to support you with your differential diagnosis.

- [Clinical Guidance Document: Management of Tick Bites and Investigation of Early Localized Lyme Disease](#)
- [Ontario Vector-Borne Disease Tool | Public Health Ontario](#)
- [Lyme disease: For health professionals - Canada.ca](#)

Diagnosis of Lyme disease is **primarily** based on clinical symptoms and risk factors, as assessed by Clinicians. Results of laboratory testing can be impacted by numerous factors; thus, the two-tiered testing approach (ELISA) is used to **support** clinical diagnosis of Lyme disease. Serological tests should **not** be used to assess treatment response, as antibodies persist long after treatment.

As a reminder, all clinically diagnosed cases of Lyme disease should be reported to the health unit.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact the Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577 ext. 1232.