



It's time to **B.L.A.S.T.** Lyme Disease.

Don't fall prey to Lyme disease! Be sure to follow the B.L.A.S.T. Lyme Disease prevention steps to protect your family. B.L.A.S.T. stands for the five most important things you can do to stay safe from all of the tick-borne diseases.

B stands for BATHING soon after spending time outdoors. A recent study showed that people who bathed or showered within two hours of coming indoors were less likely to contract Lyme Disease.

L reminds everyone to LOOK their bodies over for rashes and ticks daily. Speedy proper removal of ticks helps avoid disease transmission. Remove ticks carefully by their mouth parts with a tweezer and save them in a plastic bag for identification. Contact your local health department for tick-testing policies and notify your physician if you have any concerns. Expanding rashes should be reported to your physician in a timely manner. The painless erythema migrans (EM) rash can often go unnoticed and will eventually disappear while the infection remains. Other early symptoms include fatigue, headache, fever/chills and achy muscles and joints. Left untreated, the Lyme Disease infection can worsen and lead to joint swelling, neurological problems and cardiac complications.

A encourages you to become educated about repellents and APPLY them appropriately. Studies have shown that applying 30-40% DEET-based repellent to skin is effective at repelling blacklegged (deer) ticks. (www.deetonline.org). Application of 0.5% permethrin-based insecticide to clothing is highly effective at repelling ticks. (www.permethrin-repellent.com). Clothing treated with permethrin can be washed several times and still retains its repellent properties. Using repellents and pesticides, while proven effective, is a personal decision. Contact the National Pesticide Information Center specialists 7 days a week at 1-800-858-7378 or www.npic.orst.edu to make informed decisions.

S stands for SPRAYING the yard to reduce tick abundance. Homeowners should consider the benefits of applying pesticide to the perimeter of their yards. Studies have shown that even one application of pesticide at the right time of year and in the best location can reduce blacklegged tick populations by 85 – 90%. Complete information on tick management is available in

electronic format through the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at www.ct.gov/caes.

T reminds everyone to TREAT your pets. Local veterinarians offer a variety of methods for protecting animals from tick-borne diseases. Dogs and cats increase one's chances of exposure to Lyme disease. They carry ticks in to the home on their fur and should be checked regularly for their protection and yours. Pet owners should be cautious about sleeping with their pets. Vaccines and topical treatments keep the pet safe but not their owners.

For additional information on the BLAST Lyme Disease prevention program, email blastlyme@ridgefieldct.org. B.L.A.S.T. is a Ridgefield Health Department program funded by the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

For additional information on ticks, tick bite prevention and symptoms of Lyme Disease and other tick-borne infections such as Babesiosis and Anaplasmosis (formerly known as Ehrlichiosis).

- www.ct.gov/caes and click on "Tick Management Handbook"
- www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/index.htm
- www.ct.gov/dph and search for "Lyme disease"
- www.tahd.org and click on picture of tick (Torrington Area Health District)
- www.ridgefieldct.org (Ridgefield Health Dept.)
- www.google.com click on images and type in "ticks" "Lyme disease rashes"
- www.tickencounter.org

It's time to BLAST Lyme Disease.

Tick season is here and the Ridgefield Health Department is kicking off its new prevention program... "BLAST Lyme Disease." BLAST stands for the five most important things you and your family can do to stay safe from tick-borne diseases.

B stands for bathing soon after spending time outdoors. A recent study showed that people who didn't contract Lyme disease were more likely to shower or bathe within two hours after spending time in their yards.

L reminds everyone to look their bodies over for ticks daily and remove them properly. Speedy removal helps avoid disease transmission. Remove ticks carefully by their mouth parts with a tweezer and save them in a plastic bag for identification. Contact your local health department for tick-testing policies and notify your physician if you have any concerns. Expanding rashes should be reported to your physician in a timely manner. The painless erythema migrans (EM) rash can often go unnoticed and will eventually disappear while the infection remains. Other early symptoms include fatigue, headache, fever and achy muscles and joints.

A encourages you to become educated about repellents and apply them appropriately. Studies have shown that applying 30-40% DEET-based repellent to skin is effective at repelling blacklegged (deer) ticks. Application of 0.5% permethrin-based insecticide to clothing is highly effective at repelling ticks. Clothing treated with permethrin can be washed several times and still retains its repellent properties.

S stands for spraying the yard to reduce tick abundance. Homeowners should consider the benefits of applying pesticide to the perimeter of their yards. Studies have shown that even one application of pesticide at the right time of year and in the best location can reduce blacklegged tick populations by 85 – 90%. Complete information on tick management is available in electronic format through the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at www.ct.gov/caes.

T reminds everyone to treat your pets. Local veterinarians offer a variety of methods for protecting animals from tick-borne diseases. Dogs and cats increase one's chances of exposure to Lyme disease. Pets can carry ticks in to the home on their fur. Pet owners should be cautious about sleeping with their pets.

For additional information on the BLAST Lyme disease prevention program, contact Sue Perlotto or Jennifer Reid at the Ridgefield Health Department. Phone 203- 431-2745 or email blastlyme@ridgefieldct.org. Visit our **new** Lyme disease website at www.ridgefieldct.org.

Make everyone in the family a Lyme fighter this year. BLAST Lyme Disease.

Dear Ridgefield Community Leader,

I am very pleased to let you know that the Ridgefield Health Department received a grant to promote Lyme Disease prevention throughout Fairfield County. Our main goal is to teach families how to protect themselves from Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. This summer, we are interested in visiting local churches and synagogues to introduce the BLAST Lyme Disease program and begin educating residents about the key steps they can take to avoid tick bites and detect early symptoms for fast diagnosis and early treatment if infection occurs.

We are contacting you today to ask if you would like us to make this information available to your congregation. We would be happy to submit an article to the weekly bulletin, speak at Vacation Bible School or camps, set up a table at fairs, meet with childcare providers and mothers groups, or visit with your healing ministry. In order to do this, we need contact numbers or e-mails for the people in charge of these programs. Please e-mail us at blastlyme@ridgefieldct.org with the contact information.

Lyme Disease has become a serious medical concern throughout the Ridgefield community. Your involvement will be an important step towards keeping our families safe. Thank you for joining in this effort.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Reid
Community Coordinator
BLAST Lyme Disease Program
Ridgefield Health Department