

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY BREAKS

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

YOUR SAFETY CONCERNS: _____

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

Today's Topic: Lyme Disease in Construction

The Risks: Disease and Death

Construction workers who work outdoors stand an increased risk of contracting Lyme disease. You can get Lyme disease after a deer tick feeds on you.

The deer tick is found in most of the United States, but the Lyme disease problem is worst in northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and north-central states: Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.

Doctors in Long Island, New York, tested 396 building trades' workers and found that 43 had Lyme disease. Three of them had the disease long enough that they needed intravenous antibiotics for 6 weeks, costing thousands of dollars each. The rate of infection among the construction workers who worked outdoors on Long Island — 13% — was twice the rate for the whole Long Island population.

Lyme disease affects everyone differently. Some people get sick in about a week. Other people may not seem sick until months or years after a tick bite. The first sign may be a rash near the site of the bite. The disease can permanently damage your nervous system and joints. Sometimes the effects are so severe that joint replacement is needed.

Solution: Protect Yourself

Deer ticks are tiny—the size of the head of a pin. These ticks are found in brush, woods, and tall grass. May and June are their most prominent months, but the ticks are active during all warm months. The following tips can help keep you safe from deer tick bites:

Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Put your pants cuffs inside your work boots. Tuck in your shirt. Consider light-colored clothing, which can make it easier to spot ticks.

Use a tick repellent. Spray a repellent with permethrins in it on your clothes near their openings, such as at the bottoms of your pants and at the waistband. Apply the permethrins once a month; they don't wash out every time. Do not use these repellents on your skin.

For your skin, use a repellent that has DEET (N-diethyl-metatoluamide); it should contain no more than 33% DEET (for children 2 to 12 years old, use 10% DEET or less, and use as little of it as possible. Do not use DEET on children younger than 2). Be careful not to use too much of the repellent, and do not use on your face or hands.

Consider the Lyme disease vaccine. In the United States, there is a vaccine for Lyme disease; however, you must get at least 3 shots, and the vaccine does not always work. If you are outdoors a lot where Lyme disease is most common, you may want to ask your doctor about the vaccine.

Check for tick bites every day. After you have been outdoors where ticks might be, check all over your skin and hair for ticks. Many people notice a spot on their skin within 3 to 30 days after a tick bite. It looks like a small red bulls-eye that is spreading out.

When checking for ticks, look carefully; only 12 of the workers who had Lyme disease on Long Island knew that they had been bitten.

Remove ticks from your skin right away. Hold a tweezers on the tick as close to your skin as you can and pull. Kill the tick with alcohol and save it to show a doctor, if you can.

If you are bitten, go see a doctor. Your doctor may want to give you a blood test in order to see if you have been infected (the Lyme blood test may not show up positive until 2 weeks or more after a tick bite). The doctor may prescribe antibiotics.

Do we have an insect repellent on the jobsite?

Does anyone have any personal experience with Lyme disease?

Where on our jobsite are we more exposed to ticks?
