



NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Department of Public Health Urges Illinoisans to Guard Against Rabies and Diseases Carried By Ticks

Simple prevention tips for avoiding illness

SPRINGFIELD - As the weather warms up and people spend more time outdoors, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D., reminds residents about the importance of taking precautions against tick and animal bites, which can cause illness.

“Ticks can carry diseases like Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, tularemia, babesiosis and ehrlichiosis,” said Director Shah. “Bats and other wild animals can transmit rabies, a virus that affects the nervous system. A bite from ticks, bats, or wild animals can cause severe illness and even death in some cases, so it is important to protect yourself against bites.”

Simple tips to avoid ticks bites include:

- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes and a head covering.
- Apply insect repellent containing 10 percent to 30 percent DEET primarily to clothes.
- Walk in the center of trails so weeds do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children, other family members and pets for ticks every two to three hours.
- Remove any tick promptly by grasping it with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pull it straight out. Wash your hands and the tick bite site with soap and water.

If you become ill with fever and/or rash after being in an area where ticks may be, contact your health care provider.

While bats are the primary carrier of rabies in Illinois, any wild mammal such as a raccoon, skunk, fox, or coyote can have rabies. Rabies can be contracted through a bite from an infected animal, or when saliva from a rabid animal gets directly into a person’s eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. Seek medical attention if an animal bites you so the doctor can determine if rabies treatment is needed.

Actions to avoid rabies include:

- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals.
- Keep all vaccinations for dogs, cats and ferrets up-to-date.
- If you find a bat in your home, do not release it until you have called your local health department.

Find more information at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/animal-pest-control/vector-control-surveillance>.

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