



Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

Tick-Borne Illness

Ah, spring is finally here and summer is around the corner. What does that mean for people in the Grand Forks area? A trip to “the lake”, of course. Maybe a whole summer at “the lake”. Also fishing. And as fall approaches, hunting.

Most people in this area access “the lake” in Minnesota. But there are little critters who live there and others who are migrating ever farther northwest into Minnesota. We also have certain kinds in North Dakota. They are **TICKS**.

Some tick bites are not too dangerous, but some can pass on infectious organisms that cause serious illness.

What kinds of illnesses can be caused by tick bites?

Lyme disease is the most common. This disease is transmitted by the deer tick which is brown and smaller than a wood tick. Deer ticks are found throughout the U.S., especially on the coasts and in Wisconsin and Minnesota. If an infected tick bites you, the longer it’s attached to your skin, the greater the risk you’ll be infected.

- **Symptoms:** Several days to a few weeks after the bite, a red, circular-shaped rash may develop around the bite and flu-like signs and symptoms may follow.
- **Treatment:** When caught early, oral antibiotics can prevent complications.
- **If not treated:** Without treatment, multiple problems may develop including arthritis, facial paralysis (Bell’s palsy), heart problems and neurological problems. Then IV antibiotics may be needed. The complications may last months or years.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is the second most common tick-borne infection in the U.S. It is transmitted by several types of ticks, including the wood tick and American dog tick. This disease is more common in the eastern U.S.

- **Symptoms:** Flu-like symptoms may appear along with a red rash on the wrists & ankles that eventually spreads up the arms & legs to the chest.
- **Treatment:** Antibiotics
- **If not treated:** Without treatment serious complications may develop including heart, lung or kidney failure, or encephalitis (brain infection) leading to coma. This disease can be severe, especially in older adults, and fatal in some cases.

General Rule: If you’ve been bitten by a tick and develop a rash, fever, stiff neck, muscle aches, joint pain, swollen lymph nodes or flu-like symptoms, see your doctor immediately. Generally, the earlier tick-borne illnesses can be identified and treated, the better.

Prevention: When in areas where ticks may be, use insect repellent and wear clothing that covers your body including arms and legs.

Source: Mayo Clinic Health Letter, May 2010