

**Scouting Ireland issues the following advice to all its members at this time, periodically and where necessary such information will be updated and re - issued.**

**The following advice is based on information taken from both of the relevant Health Service Executive (HSE) and National Health Service (NHS)/Directgov offices including their respective websites.**

We are in that the period of the year, the Summer when Scout/Scouters of all ages will be hiking and camping more than ever. Equally too at this time given the current and predicted forecast, with the heat, people will understandably wear less clothing especially when rambling, hiking, exploring, etc..... It is also the time of year when ticks are at their most active and by taking a few simple precautions, the incidence of bites by ticks can be reduced.

### **Ticks**

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures with three life-cycle stages, the smallest of which is about the size of a pinhead. They are frequently found in woodland, moorland and other grassy areas, where they feed on the blood of mammals (e.g. cows, deer, etc...) and birds. They are usually found close to the ground, especially in moist, shaded areas. Ticks contain the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* which they can spread to humans through their bite

### **Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* which is spread by the bite of a tick. This bacterium can cause the person who is bitten to develop a rash. It is important to state and realise that not all bites by a tick will result in the person bitten contracting Lyme Disease.

Lyme disease can be treated using antibiotics. Treatment lasts generally for up to three weeks to ensure that the bacteria have been killed. It is important that the full course of antibiotics is taken to prevent wider spread of the bacteria.

### **Precautions against being bitten by a tick include:**

- Walking in the middle of paths/trails.
- Where possible avoid overgrown vegetation
- Wearing a hat
- Wearing a long sleeved shirt, tucked in at the waist and wrists
- Wear trousers rather than shorts particularly in areas of dense vegetation equally too in such areas wear boots/shoes, rather than sandals or bare feet
- Consider using an insect repellent containing DEET. Follow the manufacturers' application guidelines
- At the end of your day out, ensure that all Scouts and Scouters self check themselves for ticks. Ensure that both skin and hair are checked, and

particularly warm moist areas such as the groin, backs of knees, armpits and neck.

- If you find a tick, remove it as described below, and if symptoms develop consult your local Medical Practitioner (Doctor) symptoms develop.

### **What to do if a Scout/Scouter is bitten by a tick:**

- Firstly don't panic. Only a small minority of ticks carry the bacteria. The risk of developing Lyme disease increases the longer the tick is attached to the skin. However, if the tick is removed within the first few hours after a bite, the person concerned is very unlikely to develop Lyme disease
- Remove the tick (ideally with tweezers) by gripping it close to the skin of the Scout/Scouter concerned. Wash the area as soon as possible afterwards with soap and water
- If any of the mouthparts of the tick are left behind in the skin of the Scout/Scouter, then remove as much as possible with tweezers
- Ensure the Scout/Scouter (and where appropriate their parent/guardian) check the skin area concerned over the next few weeks for a rash. Initial redness and swelling on the same day as the bite itself is normal and does not indicate infection
- If a rash or other symptoms develop, the Scout/Scouter concerned should like any best practice see their either their own Medical Practitioner (Doctor) if at home, or the Medical Practitioner (Doctor) local to the Camp or Hostel and report being bitten by a tick
- The Medical Practitioner (Doctor) will make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment if necessary

Further Information are available on:

#### **Health Service Executive (HSE)**

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/media/pressrel/lymedisease.html>

<http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Vectorborne/LymeDisease/>

#### **National Health Service (NHS)**

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bites-insect/pages/introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Bites-insect/Pages/Treatment.aspx>