Stay Protected Against Lyme Disease

Blue Cross offers tips on identifying and preventing tick bites during the summer

BOSTON — August 21, 2015 —Lyme disease is on the rise, and spreading to new areas. TheCenter for Disease Control (CDC) reports that Lyme disease continues to peak during the summer season, witha growing number of confirmed cases in recent years.

“Lyme is the most common of tick-borne illnesses and is a multistage, multisystem bacterial infection,” said Jane Williams, MD, MPH, Medical Director at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. “While most tick bites are harmless, several species that live in wooded areas, low-growing grasslands and yards can cause life-threatening diseases. Our goal is to keep people safe and provide them with the tools they need and avoid putting themselves at risk.”

According to the CDC, Lyme disease symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, a rash in the shape of abulls-eye and joint pain. It is important to remember several things **if you’ve identified a tick on your body**:

- Do not touch the tick with your bare hand.
- Use tweezers and grab the tick firmly by its mouth or head as close to your skin as possible.
- Pull up slowly and steadily without twisting until it lets go.
- Save the tick and place it in a plastic container or bag so it can be tested for disease, if necessary.
- Thoroughly wash the bite area with soap and water and apply an antiseptic lotion or cream.
- Call your doctor immediately to find out about follow-up care.

Some general guidelines for **preventing Lyme disease** include:

- Dress appropriately by wearing
    - Light-colored clothing
    - Long-sleeved shirts
    - Socks and closed-toe shoes
    - Long pants with legs tucked into socks
- Frequently check for ticks on all parts of your body, especially behind the knees and ears, between fingers and toes, your neck, at the top of your head, and underarms.
- Use repellents that contain DEET and permethrin, which can be sprayed on top of clothing.
- Shower after all outdoor activities.

Visit ahealthyme to learn more about Lyme disease and tick bites.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are the trusted health plan for more than 30,000 Massachusetts employers and are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

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