

## 'Tis the (Tick) Season

People everywhere are conquering their cabin fever and are enjoying the great outdoors after a long, bitter winter. But before you head out for that hike, health care experts remind you to take precautions to avoid tick bites.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates around 300,000 people are infected with Lyme disease each year, and is now warning people to be on the lookout for signs and symptoms of the disease, which is usually contracted through tick bites.

Tina Barton, Infection Preventionist at OSF HealthCare Saint James-John W. Albrecht Medical Center says there are tell-tale signs of Lyme disease, including a rash around the bite mark that takes the shape of a bulls-eye.

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**Tina Barton, Infection Preventionist, OSF HealthCare Saint James Medical Center**

"If you get infected, then it starts out with a rash. The rash may not appear for like three days or so and then it's followed by a lot of like flu-like symptoms. So it can be fatigue and sore throats and things like that can go along with it too." (:18)

When caught early, Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. However, when untreated the disease can develop into meningitis, or other severe illnesses that can require hospitalization and further treatment.

According to Barton, the best action against Lyme disease is to pay attention to your surroundings and avoid the bite in the first place.

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**Tina Barton, Infection Preventionist, OSF HealthCare Saint James Medical Center**

"If you're going to be in a wooded area or a weedy area, that type of thing, you need to stay in the middle of the path and not out where you're up against it. Because there's a myth out there that ticks fall out of trees, but they don't fall out of trees, they're on the ground so they get on you and they crawl up you." (:17)

[The CDC gives us some simple steps](#) to keep tick bites at bay, including avoiding wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter and walking in the center of trails. It is also recommended to use repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET on exposed skin.

After coming in from the outdoors, you should also conduct a full-body tick check, and parents should check their children for ticks as well.