



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2025

CONTACT:

James.Leach@illinois.gov

KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Powassan is a virus that is spread to humans through tick bites and can cause serious illness, including brain swelling. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for this virus.
- IDPH recommends taking appropriate precautions to protect against all tick bites, even in the fall season, after an Illinois resident became seriously ill with Powassan. The state is currently investigating the source of exposure.
- The risk to the general public is low if appropriate precautions against tick bites are taken.

Commented [EB1]: Better way of saying this?

IDPH Reminds Illinois Residents to Take Precautions Against Tick Bites

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding Illinoisans to take appropriate precautions against tick bites after an Illinois resident became seriously ill with Powassan – a tickborne illness that had not previously been detected in this state. IDPH and the local health department are currently investigating whether the resident was exposed to the illness through a tick bite here in Illinois or in a different state. IDPH says the case serves as a reminder to protect oneself against any and all illnesses associated with ticks.

“With warm weather still prevalent, tick-borne diseases remain a potential threat here in Illinois,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “It’s important for everyone to guard against tick bites and the serious illnesses they can cause. We urge everyone to ‘Fight the Bite’ by reducing opportunities for exposures and repelling tick bites by wearing preventive clothing. If you have been in a wooded or grassy area where ticks are common and you begin to show symptoms like fever, fatigue, or headache, see a health care provider immediately.”

Powassan is a virus that can be spread to humans through the bite of an infected tick; the black-legged deer tick is most frequently associated with Powassan. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), initial symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, and weakness. Powassan virus can cause severe disease, including inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) or the membranes around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), and can sometimes be fatal. Symptoms of severe disease include confusion, loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, and seizures. Powassan cannot be spread human-to-human through casual contact.

Commented [EB2]: Better way to say this also please confirm if true?

IDPH will be conducting active tick surveillance, i.e. dragging and testing ticks for Powassan and other infections, in areas of Illinois where the case spent time prior to their illness.

It’s important to protect against tick bites to prevent that and other serious tickborne illnesses, including Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, tularemia, ehrlichiosis, and babesiosis.

linktr.ee/IDPH



dph.illinois.gov

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS RELEASE

Director Vohra stresses that people can also “Fight the Bite” by diligently checking themselves, their pets and children for ticks after spending time in areas where ticks live, such as in and near wooded areas, tall grass and brush. Removing ticks within a 24-hour period reduces the risk of potential disease transmission.

Following are additional tips for how to avoid tickborne illnesses and have a healthy time in the outdoors:

- [Learn about tick removal and symptom awareness HERE.](#)
- Walk in the center of trails. Avoid wooded, bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. Our [Camper Checklist](#) provides more details on how to protect yourself.
- Wear light-colored clothing to make ticks easier to find. Tuck long pants into socks and boots.
- Apply an EPA-registered insect repellent containing 20% DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus according to label directions. The [EPA has a search tool](#) that can help you find the product that best suits your needs.
- Conduct full-body tick checks on family members (underarms, ears, belly button, behind knees, between legs, waist, hair and scalp) every two to three hours. Also check any gear or pets taken on outings.
- To kill ticks after being outdoors, put clothes in the dryer on high for 10 minutes (or one hour for damp clothes).
- Bathe or shower within two hours after coming indoors.
- If you find a blacklegged tick on you that may have been attached for more than three days, then seek medical attention to decide if you need an antibiotic to prevent Lyme disease.
- It is often helpful to keep the tick for species identification. Place the tick in rubbing alcohol or in a sealed bag/container to bring to your healthcare provider or local health department for submission to IDPH. [A submission form can be found HERE](#) on the IDPH website.

###



dph.illinois.gov



linktr.ee/IDPH