

When should you worry about ticks in your neighborhood?

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The study, which took place between June 2012 and May 2014, identified 1375 deer ticks (481 nymphs and 894 adults) along walkways with heavy foot traffic. Interestingly, the adult ticks were collected between April and November, while the majority of nymphs were gathered only in the summer.

Researchers examined the prevalence of ticks infected with the Lyme disease bacterium in "built environments," which included college campuses, parks, and playgrounds.

According to the authors, the overall tick infection rates in nymphal and adult ticks with *B. burgdorferi* "along walkways of high human use in built environments" was high or higher than in many Lyme-endemic counties of Hudson Valley, New York.

The findings, [by Roome from the Department of Anthropology at Binghamton University](#), raises two public health concerns:

First, there is a false notion that ticks are not a threat to humans in the spring and fall months. But they are.

"Summer is considered the highest risk season for Lyme disease transmission," writes Roome. And health officials typically focus on this season for promoting tick bite prevention campaigns.

But in fact, the [risk of being bitten by an infected tick](#) is higher in the spring and fall, Roome states. "Our data suggest that high tick density and infection rate in spring and fall months represent a significant population health risk."

"Tick infection rate is proportionally higher during the fall and spring than summer (30.0–54.7% in fall and 36.8–65.6% in spring vs. 20.0–28.2% in summer)," writes Roome and colleagues.

Second, the public may mistakenly believe that these "built environments provide a safe haven from contact with potentially infected ticks." They do not.

"Along walkways with high human use, DNA analyses revealed an overall *B. burgdorferi* infection rate of 39.0%," writes Roome. More than one quarter (27.5%) of these were nymphal ticks and nearly half (45.5%) were adult ticks.

The authors conclude that the public is at an increased risk of becoming infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi* during any season ticks are active, even if the public is congregating in these "built environments."

Related Articles:

[What blood type do ticks prefer?](#)

[Will eliminating deer help stop the spread of infected ticks?](#)

[Hundreds of infected ticks found in one yard in Canada](#)

References:

1. Roome A, Spathis R, Hill L, Darcy JM, Garruto RM. Lyme Disease Transmission Risk: Seasonal Variation in the Built Environment. Healthcare (Basel). 2018;6(3).

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