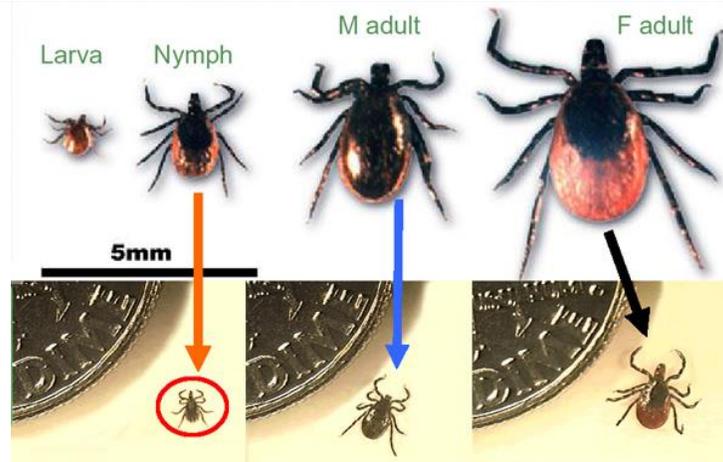


Two Cases of Powassan Encephalitis Identified in Maine Residents



AUGUSTA - Last week, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) was notified of two cases of Powassan Encephalitis. Both cases occurred in adults who reside in the MidCoast area. In the two cases, the individuals became ill in late April and were hospitalized. The cases were confirmed through testing at CDC Fort Collins. Both individuals were discharged from the hospital and are recovering.

Powassan, also known as deer tick virus, has been around since 1958 when it was discovered in Powassan, Ontario. Cases are rare in the US and Maine has identified nine cases since 2000, including these two.

Powassan virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected Ixodes (including both the woodchuck and deer) tick. Signs and symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, seizures, and memory loss. Long-term neurologic problems may occur. Symptoms can begin anytime from one week to one month after the tick bite.

"Powassan, although rare, can be serious so it is important to be aware of your surroundings and take steps to avoid being bitten by ticks. Ticks are found in wooded and bushy areas so use caution if you go into these areas," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Siiri Bennett. "By following the No Ticks 4 ME approach you can help reduce exposure to ticks and thus lower the risk of disease."

The No Ticks 4 ME approach includes:

- Wearing protective clothing. Light clothing makes ticks easier to see and long sleeves and pants reduces exposed skin for ticks to attach.
- Use an EPA repellent and always follow the labels. Clothing and gear can be treated with Permethrin for longer protection.
- Use caution in tick infested areas. Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and stay in the middle of trails whenever possible.
- Perform daily tick checks. Check for ticks immediately after exiting high risk areas. Bathe or shower (preferably within 2 hours after being outdoors) to wash off and find ticks on your body. Conduct a full-body tick check. Also examine clothing, gear, and pets.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension office offers free tick identification. More information is available on their website: <https://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>

For more information on Powassan and other tickborne diseases visit www.maine.gov/idepi and click on vector-borne diseases. A video short on Powassan is also available at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/videos.shtml>