

Insect-borne diseases

Introduction:

Summer is the peak season for ticks, insect bites and Lyme disease. If you work outdoors, take precautions and check yourself for ticks.

Diseases carried by insects pose some summer-time hazard even though infection is unlikely from any individual insect bite.

Hazards to watch for:

- Being outdoors at dawn, dusk and early evening.
- Tall grass, shrubs and wooded areas.
- Be particularly careful in May, June and July when ticks are most active.

Types of illnesses

Lyme disease, a tick-borne illness is typically transmitted by the deer tick.

To transmit Lyme Disease, a tick must be attached for at least 12 hours, so routine checks help prevent transmission.

Symptoms of Lyme Disease include:

- Headache
- Flu-like symptoms
- A “Bull’s-eye” rash (two inches in diameter)
- Swelling and pain in the joints

West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans by infected mosquitoes. The incubation period is three to 15 days.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus infection are:

- Neck stiffness
- Disorientation
- Tremors or convulsions
- Muscle weakness or paralysis

Safe procedures:

To reduce exposure to insect-borne diseases:

- Avoid tall grass and shrubs.
- Wear long pants, sleeves, closed-toe shoes and a hat. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots to help keep ticks and other insects on the outside of clothing.
- Wear light colored clothes to make seeing a tick easier.
- Use bug repellents with DEET on shoes, socks and pants.
- Work indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening..
- Perform daily body checks for ticks, including armpits, scalp and groin.
- If a tick is found, remove it immediately with fine-tipped tweezers. Cleanse with an antiseptic.

In conclusion:

Although the chances of these insect-borne diseases affecting any one employee are rare, the effects can be devastating. Be aware of the risks and make adjustments as necessary.