

TOOLBOX TALK #46

LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is becoming more and more prevalent in the United States according to a recent study by lab services provider Quest Diagnostics. An analysis of more than six million lab tests conducted over the past seven years found about 35,000 positive tests for Lyme disease in 2017. That's up from fewer than 20,000 in 2013.

More than 60 percent of the 2017 positive test results were in the Northeast United States, with Pennsylvania leading all states with 10,001 cases. In California, however, cases surged 194.5 percent from 2015 to 2017, while cases in Florida jumped 77 percent over the same period. Notable increases were also seen in Arizona, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.



“Lyme disease is a bigger risk to more people in the United States than ever before,” Harvey W. Kaufman, senior medical director for Quest Diagnostics, said in a recent press release. “We hypothesize that these significant rates of increase may reinforce other research suggesting changing climate conditions that allow ticks to live longer and in more regions may factor into disease risk.”

Lyme disease, spread by bites from infected deer ticks, account for an estimated 329,000 illnesses in the United States each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms include a bull's-eye rash, facial palsy, fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes.

Workers who spend a lot of time outdoors especially in more wooded areas and spaces with higher vegetation are more susceptible than those who strictly work indoors. Even during your recreational time like hiking, hunting, camping and fishing, you need to be aware of this hazard. But there is help.

“People treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover rapidly and completely,” CDC states.