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ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LYME DISEASE:

The Emergency Care Center at Sturdy Memorial Hospital
Offers Prevention and Awareness Tips

ATTLEBORO, MA, July 13, 2012—Summer is the perfect time for enjoying the outdoors. Unfortunately, summer is also tick season. “Whether your activities are hiking, camping, or even taking a walk or gardening in the backyard, you are at risk for Lyme disease because deer ticks, which carry the infection, could be anywhere outdoors,” says Dr. Brian Kelly, Associate Chief of Ambulatory Services at Sturdy Memorial Hospital and board certified Emergency Medicine physician. Lyme disease is an infection caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Untreated, the bacterium travels through the bloodstream and establishes itself in various tissues, which can cause a number of symptoms, some of which are severe.

“This year, we are seeing an increase in the amount of Lyme disease presenting at Sturdy’s Emergency Care Center,” says Dr. Kelly. **But you can take several preventive measures to avoid Lyme disease:**

- Avoid wooded, bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Use insect repellent with 20 percent or more of DEET, the active ingredient in many repellent products, on adult skin to prevent tick bites. Use products that contain permethrin on clothing.
- Wear long pants, sleeves, socks, and hats to keep ticks off your skin.
- Check your skin and clothes for ticks and remove them before going indoors. “Ticks like warm, cozy areas, so pay special attention to the folds of the skin, such as underarms, behind the knees, in and around the ears, the back of the neck, and beltlines,” says Dr. Richard Smith, Chief of Pathology and board certified Pathologist.

If you do find a tick, remove the body with fine-tipped tweezers right away. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), deer ticks need to be attached for at least 24 hours before they can transmit Lyme disease. However, because many people with Lyme disease don’t remember getting a tick bite, **you need to be aware of the symptoms of Lyme disease:**

- “The first, and classic, sign of Lyme disease infection is an expanding, circular skin rash or blotch,” says Dr. Kelly. “It is commonly referred to as a ‘bull’s eye rash’ because of a ring that appears and grows around the site of the tick bite.” According to the CDC, the rash occurs in approximately 70-80 percent of infected persons and begins at the site of a tick bite after a delay of 3-30 days (the average is about 7 days). “The rash could be solid rather than ring-shaped, or even appear as multiple lesions all over the body.”
- “Other symptoms of Lyme disease can include joint pains, headache, fever, chills, and fatigue. If left untreated, severe symptoms, such as arthritis, disorientation, dizziness, and short-term memory loss, can occur,” says Dr. Smith.

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If you think you have symptoms of Lyme disease, seek medical attention immediately. Diagnosis of the disease should be made early in order to prevent severe symptoms and complications.

Sturdy's Emergency Care Center is equipped to handle some of the most serious situations life has to offer and treats nearly 50,000 patients annually. Staffed by physicians and nurses who are career emergency professionals and/or have been extensively trained in treating emergencies, the ECC is open 24 hours a day. For more information, visit www.sturdymemorial.org.

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