Vector-borne disease and climate change

Vectors in Maine

- Vectors are insects and other organisms that transmit disease to humans
- In Maine these vectors are most commonly mosquitoes and ticks
- Shortened winters and more extreme rain events—characteristic of our changing climate—are associated with greater tick and mosquito activity and abundance

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by one of the 14 tick species in Maine, the deer tick.

It is the most commonly reported vector-borne disease in the United States and the second most commonly reported infectious disease in Maine.

Temperatures, deer tick populations, and Lyme disease are on the rise in Maine.

Other tick-borne disease in Maine

- Babesiosis – a malaria-like parasitic disease
- Anaplasmosis – a bacterial illness
- Powassan – a tick-borne viral infection

- 2013 fatal case of tick-borne Powassan virus type 2 (deer tick virus)
- 2017 record case numbers of anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Lyme

* 2016 data are preliminary as of 01/10/2016

Maine CDC data, Report to Maine Legislature Lyme and other Tickborne Illnesses, February 1, 2017
Mosquito-borne illnesses

- 2012 first human case of West Nile virus in Maine; 2nd in 2015
- 2014 first human case of eastern equine encephalitis virus in Maine, 2nd in 2015 (fatal)
- 2017 first two cases of Jamestown Canyon virus
- Cases of malaria, Dengue, and Zika virus were contracted outside of Maine

What you can do

See your physician if you think you have been exposed

Prevent exposure

→ Keep your property free of standing water (remove old tires or any other debris that might hold stagnant water)
→ Wear long sleeves and pants
→ Use repellent (if using a product containing DEET, use only on clothing, (never use a repellent containing DEET on children)
→ Mosquitos are most prevalent at dawn and dusk

→ Tick habitat is primarily wooded, damp areas with high grass and leaf debris (ticks are out nearly year-round in Maine)

What we can do together

- Support and use clean energy like solar
- Make your home and auto more energy efficient
- Try to eat more locally, organically, and plant-based foods (waste less)
- Support candidates who are serious about reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases
- Work with and/or support local groups and organizations to promote awareness of and advocate for global climate change policy
- Support efforts that require all power plants to meet federal air pollution standards

Check out the full Death by Degrees report on our website for more information.

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