

Two reported cases of rare tick-related illness in NJ

June 11 2019, by Mari A. Schaefer, Philly.com

Two cases of a rare tick-related illness have been confirmed in northern New Jersey, health officials reported Saturday.

Officials at the Sussex County Division of Health are currently investigating the cases of Powassan virus, which is spread through a bite from an infected black-legged [tick](#), also known as the [deer tick](#).

One person who tested positive for the virus died in May, but the exact cause of death has not been determined, the New Jersey Herald reported. The victim was 80 years old and suffered from a number of unrelated medical issues his family told the paper. The other person who tested positive is recovering at home, the Herald reported.

The number of reported cases of those infected with Powassan virus has increased in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2017, 33 cases were confirmed throughout the U.S.—up from just two cases in 2008.

The disease can cause inflammation of the brain and the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms, which can occur one week to one month after a tick bite, can include fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, loss of coordination, speech difficulties, and seizures, according to the CDC.

There may be long-term neurologic problems related to the virus, according to NJ [health officials](#).

People who spend time outdoors in areas where the [virus](#) is endemic are at increased risk of infection. Most cases are found the northeast and Great Lakes regions of the U.S. and occur primarily in the late spring, [early summer](#), and mid-fall when ticks are most active, the CDC reported.

Tips for avoiding tick bites from the CDC:

Avoid contact with ticks by walking in the center of trails. Ticks are found in wooded and brushy areas with high grass and [leaf litter](#).

Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin.

Use repellents approved by the Environmental Protection Agency that contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone.

Always check clothing, gear and pets for ticks after spending time outdoors.

Check your body for ticks including under the arms, in and around the ears, inside belly button, on the back of the knees, in and around the hair, between the legs and around the waist.

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