



SCHOHARIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

284 MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 667 SCHOHARIE, NY 12157
TEL: (518) 295-8365 FAX: (518) 295-8327 HEALTH@CO.SCHOHARIE.NY.US

Dr. Amy E. Gildemeister, Ph. D.
Director of Public Health

NOTICE TO RESIDENTS OF SCHOHARIE COUNTY, NY

June 3, 2022

The Schoharie County Department of Health would like to alert residents of the presence of the Powassan Virus in Schoharie County. At the tick-sampling location in southern Schoharie County, 20% of the groups of ticks that were tested were positive for the virus that causes Powassan.

Powassan (POW) virus disease is a rare, but often serious disease caused by a virus that is spread by the bite of infected ticks. Powassan can be transmitted from the tick to a human within the first fifteen minutes after the tick attaches, meaning that prevention of tick bites through the use of protective clothing and insecticides is very important. The virus is not transmitted directly from person-to-person.

Powassan can cause symptoms ranging from mild flu-like symptoms to life-threatening encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Because it is a virus, antibiotics are not an effective treatment. Approximately 10% of people who have a severe POW infection die from the disease. Of those who survive severe disease, approximately 50% have serious long-term health problems. In New York State, there are typically 1 to 2 cases of POW virus disease per year. Nationally, approximately 75 cases of POW virus disease were reported over the past 10 years (the most up-to-date national statistics can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/powassan/statistics.html>).

Prevention by following proper precautions to reduce exposure to ticks is the best defense against POW virus disease. Additional information can be found on the NYS Department of Health website at <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/powassan/index>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at 518-295-8382.

Schoharie County Department of Health

Enc. It's Open Season on Ticks (handout)
A Guide for Preventing Lyme Disease (pamphlet)
Prevent Tick Bites! (sign)

[HTTP://WWW.SCHOHARIECOUNTY-NY.GOV](http://www.schohariecounty-ny.gov)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
TEL: (518) 295-8382
FAX: (518) 295-8453

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING
TEL: (518) 295-8474
FAX: (518) 295-8786

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS
TEL: (518) 295-8705
FAX: (518) 295-8435

Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment

Symptoms

- Many people infected with Powassan virus do not have symptoms.
- For people with symptoms, the time from tick bite to feeling sick ranges from 1 week to 1 month.
- Initial symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, and weakness.
- Powassan virus can cause severe disease, including infection of the brain (encephalitis) or the membranes around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).
- Symptoms of severe disease include confusion, loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, and seizures.
- Approximately 1 out of 10 people with severe disease die.
- Approximately half of the people who survive severe disease have long-term health problems such as recurring headaches, loss of muscle mass and strength, and memory problems.

Diagnosis

- Healthcare providers diagnose Powassan virus infection based on:
 - Signs and symptoms
 - History of possible exposure to the ticks that can carry Powassan virus
 - Laboratory testing of blood or spinal fluid
- More information on diagnostic testing is available [here](#).

Treatment

- There is no medication to treat Powassan virus infection.
- People with severe disease often need to be hospitalized to receive support for breathing, staying hydrated, or reducing swelling in the brain.
- If you think you or a family member might have Powassan virus disease, see your healthcare provider.
- To learn more about treatment, visit our [Healthcare Provider page](#).