



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH
PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

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Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 12 noon and 1 to 5 pm

Tick Collection and Testing for Lyme Disease Information Sheet

1. Attempt to remove the tick intact. Usually, you can pull the tick out straight with a pair of tweezers. Do not kill the tick by burning or placing chemicals on it, such as alcohol. If the tick is too damaged or has dried out, it cannot be tested.
2. After removing the tick, place it in a sealed container or ziplock bag with a paper towel moistened with water. **Label the container with client's name.** Water will keep the tick from drying out. **Do not put the tick into formalin or alcohol.**
3. Information required to have the tick tested by the lab: name of the person bitten, date of birth, gender, phone number, mailing address, date and time tick was removed, and the geographic location where the tick was acquired.
4. Only the species *Ixodes pacificus* carries the Lyme bacteria in this area. There is no charge by PHB Laboratory for identification of the tick species.
5. There is a charge of **\$37.00** to have the tick tested for Lyme disease. Please make checks payable to H.C.P.H. **Tick testing is not covered by Insurance or Medi-Cal.**
6. All **positive** tick reports are called to the client by lab staff. All reports (positive or negative) are mailed.

Interpretation of Results

The fluorescent antibody test performed is specific for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease. A positive result from this test indicates that the tick carries the Lyme disease bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. It does not necessarily mean that the bacteria have infected the bitten person. Studies have shown that, among other factors, the possibility of infection with *Borrelia burgdorferi* increases with the amount of time the tick has been feeding on the person. The development of Lyme disease varies greatly.

A PERSON BITTEN BY A TICK CARRYING BORRELIA BURGDORFERI SHOULD ALWAYS CONSULT WITH THEIR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

A non-reactive test for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, on the other hand, indicates that the particular tick tested did not harbor the Lyme disease organism, within the limits of the sensitivity of the fluorescent antibody test. It does not mean that the person is not infected by *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The person may have been bitten by another tick that was not brought in for examination, or may have been bitten at another time. Also, ticks can cause many other diseases besides Lyme disease.

IF A PERSON WHO IS BITTEN BY A TICK BECOMES SICK IN ANY WAY, THEY SHOULD TELL THEIR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER THAT A TICK HAS BITTEN THEM.

- If you have medical questions you may also contact the Humboldt County Public Health Nurse "On Call" at 445-6200.
- For more information go to www.dhs.ca.gov, select Health Publications Folder and then Search.