

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tickborne Heartland Virus Case In Illinois

Continue to take steps to avoid tick bites

SPRINGFIELD—The risk of tickborne illness is still out there, even as we head into the fall. A Kankakee resident recently tested positive for Heartland Virus, the first reported case in Illinois. Reported cases of Heartland virus disease are relatively rare. Likely spread by the Lone Star tick, more than 30 cases of Heartland virus disease have been reported in the Midwest and southern United States.

“We’ve been seeing much warmer weather than usual for this time of the year, which people have taken advantage of by spending time outside,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “While the weather is still warm, continue to take steps to protect yourself from tick bites.”

Heartland virus was first identified in 2009 when two Missouri farmers who had been bitten by ticks were admitted to a hospital. Almost all individuals with Heartland virus have been hospitalized. Although most people infected have fully recovered, a few have died. There are no vaccines to prevent Heartland virus infections.

Signs and symptoms of infection are similar to those of other tickborne diseases and can include fever, headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, and diarrhea. Most people have reported becoming sick about two weeks after being bit by a tick. And while there is no treatment, doctors can treat some of the symptoms. If you have been bitten by a tick and think you may have Heartland virus or another tickborne illness, visit a health care provider. Other tickborne illnesses Illinois residents have been diagnosed with include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis, and tularemia.

Ticks are commonly found on the tips of grasses and shrubs. Ticks crawl—they cannot fly or jump. The tick will wait in the grass or shrub for a person or animal to walk by and then quickly climb aboard. Some ticks will attach quickly and others will wander, looking for places like the ear, or other areas where the skin is thinner.

Simple tips to avoid ticks bites include:

- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, pants, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Treat clothing with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin.

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- Apply insect repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin for protection that lasts several hours.
- Walk in the center of trails so grass, shrubs, and weeds do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children, other family members, and pets for ticks every two to three hours.
- Remove any tick promptly by grasping it with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pulling it straight out. Wash your hands and the tick bite site with soap and water.

Additional information about [ticks](#) can be found on the [IDPH website](#). A [map](#) of the geographical location of Heartland virus cases is also available on the CDC website.

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