

## **Lyme Carditis and Sudden Cardiac Death**

To: Vermont Healthcare Providers  
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**– Please Distribute as Appropriate –**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published a report ([http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6249a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6249a1\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6249a1.htm?s_cid=mm6249a1_w)) about sudden cardiac death associated with Lyme carditis. Symptomatic infection of the heart is rare in recognized Lyme disease cases. Approximately 1 percent of reported cases have Lyme carditis, which is usually present with other features of Lyme disease but can be observed independently. It can occur in all age groups but is more common among males age 15 to 45 than would be expected based on the age distribution of people who get Lyme disease.

The most common cardiac manifestation is atrioventricular block. Symptoms of atrioventricular block include lightheadedness, palpitations, shortness of breath, chest pain and syncope. Some cases might require temporary pacing, although prognosis is excellent with appropriate antibiotic therapy.

Because Lyme carditis is rare, it is important to identify cases to learn whether certain groups of patients are at higher risk of sudden cardiac death associated with Lyme carditis. A total of seven fatal cases of Lyme carditis have been reported in the medical literature (including those in the recent CDC report).

### **Actions Requested:**

- Ask all patients with suspected Lyme disease about cardiac symptoms, e.g., palpitations, chest pain, light headedness, fainting, shortness of breath and increased dyspnea with exertion.
- Ask patients with acute, unexplained cardiac symptoms about possible tick exposure and symptoms of Lyme disease.
- Consult IDSA guidelines for treatment recommendations: <http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/43/9/1089.full.pdf+html>
- Talk to patients about preventing tick bites.
- Report cases of Lyme disease to the Health Department at (802) 863-7240.

Lyme disease is endemic in Vermont, and the number of case reports continues to increase.

**For more information:** [http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/signs\\_symptoms/lymeCarditis.html](http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/signs_symptoms/lymeCarditis.html)