

A New Health Risk

by
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Open any newspaper or news magazine, or tune into any news program on television, and you are inundated with political and social news. Even during COVID we saw the rapid politicalization and social dictates of a deadly pandemic. Instead of concentrating to control and cure COVID, politicians, socialists, and far-left radicals took the opportunity to shackle Americans to their ideologies and beliefs.

In the past, reasonable minds attacked health and environmental “disasters” with calm and deliberate actions that were mostly free from political and social pressure. It remains to be seen whether or not past behavior will rein in the politicalization and forced dictates of future disasters.

We have all seen those disaster and alien invaders movies. In most of them government responses took things to an entirely different level while a few level headed people were able to remediate the crisis. While being fictional, we have also observed non-fictional disasters played out across the silver screen (TV to younger readers).

Earlier this year, there was a train wreck involving toxic chemicals resulting in contamination of the local water supply and air, creating serious health problems for the wildlife and residents. These and other catastrophes keep popping up around the country. The latest one, a health crisis, affecting people directly is an allergy to red meat called *Alpha-gal Syndrome*.

What? How can that be?

According to the CDC at least 500,000 people nationwide are affected by *Alpha-gal Syndrome*. This syndrome is triggered when a person is bitten by the Lone Star tick.

As a side note we should mention that there are more than 90 other tick species in the US. Of these, three are of major concern that people should be aware of.

Species	Causes
Deer Ticks	Lyme disease
Dog Ticks	Rocky Mountain spotted fever
Lone Star Ticks	Alpha-gal Syndrome



Alpha-gal is a sugar molecule that is found in most mammals. However it is not part of the human anatomy and therein lies the problem.

Lone Star ticks carry the alpha gal sugar in their bodies. When they bite someone, they inject some of the sugar along with other chemicals into the body in order to prevent coagulation of the blood as they feed on the person.

Alpha-gal can be found in food products such as gelatin, milk, milk products, candy, and in various medications such as Tylenol gel caps which are made from gelatin.

Allergic reactions to alpha-gal can include: hives or an itchy rash, nausea or vomiting, heartburn or indigestion, diarrhea, a drop in blood pressure, swelling of the lips, tongue or eyelids, dizziness or faintness, or severe stomach pain. Once this sugar is in the body it strains the immune system, which in turn creates a permanent allergy to red meat and their byproducts.

The Lone Start tick is a growing threat. Once considered a southern states problem, the tick has migrated as far north as Maine, and to westward into the central states.



From its larva stage to adulthood, the ticks will feed on humans and are very aggressive. During the nymph and adult stages, Lone Stars are capable to transmitting *Alpha-gal Syndrome*.



The ticks have a variety of natural predators who will eat them. These include chickens, guinea fowl, wild turkeys, ants, spiders, opossums, frogs, squirrels, lizards, ants, and fire ants. However, with that said, the ticks will also use 2 and 4 legged creature as food hosts.

Remember that as small as the Lone Star tick is, it can lead to serious health issues if you are bitten by one or more of them.

Preventing tick bites, and what to do if you see a tick on you

- **Dress to protect.** Ticks live at the edges of yards and in wooded areas. Wear long sleeves and pants, and your best bet is for light-colored clothing, since ticks will be most visible.
- **Check yourself.** When you come back indoors check your body and your clothes for ticks. Put any clothing that you suspect might carry ticks into the dryer for 20 minutes, as the heat will kill them.
- **Chemical treatments.** Bug sprays that contain DEET are effective on exposed skin. Also treating clothing and footwear with an insecticide called permethrin is “HIGHLY” effective.
- **Test the tick** .If you do see a tick, remove it with pointy tweezers. Consider testing it with the [TickReport](#) to see what pathogens you may have been exposed to.
- **Do your research.** Visit the [Cape Cod Cooperative Extension](#)'s website for more information.

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For more information on Lone Star ticks go to:

<https://web.uri.edu/tickencounter/species/lone-star-tick/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/surveillance/lonestartick.html> (interactive map)