

PUBLIC HEALTH

NEWS & VIEWS

A Regional Health Professional Newsletter



FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S DESK

Karen Luparello, DO, MPH, Medical Director

As we welcome spring and wait for sunshine and warmer days, it is important to prepare for spring weather, including tornadoes, which can continue occurring throughout the summer. Although emergency drills can interrupt daily tasks and workflow, establishing a plan for both home and work is essential for ensuring we make sound decisions during a real crisis.

As the weather improves, encourage your patients to be aware of the risks associated with outdoor activities. Patients should be educated regarding water safety, heat related illnesses and the risks of orthopedic injuries. This newsletter covers steps that we can all take to prevent mosquito and tick-borne illnesses.

With measles still a concern, the current data clearly supports the benefits of vaccination,. As providers, please take a moment to chat with your patients regarding the benefits of the measles vaccine.

This newsletter also reviews communicable disease, surveillance and reporting changes. All three of our health department offices can assist with how and when to report diseases.

Our great state continues to support programs for women and children. This issue discusses some changes in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program and also gives some details on Early On. Remember to get your kindergarten and young 5 patients ready for their upcoming school year by discussing the need for hearing and vision screenings, immunizations, and the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment. We have also included as a reminder, the requirements for universal lead testing.

Spring and summer are so beautiful in Michigan. I hope that you find time to get outside with family and friends. Enjoy the upcoming weather and stay safe.

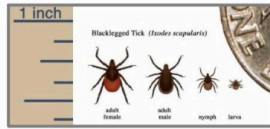
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Vector-Borne Disease

Mosquito and tick-borne diseases are a yearly concern in Michigan, posing risks to human and animal health. For Michigan data on mosquito-transmitted viruses, visit: [Arbovirus Summary 2025](#).

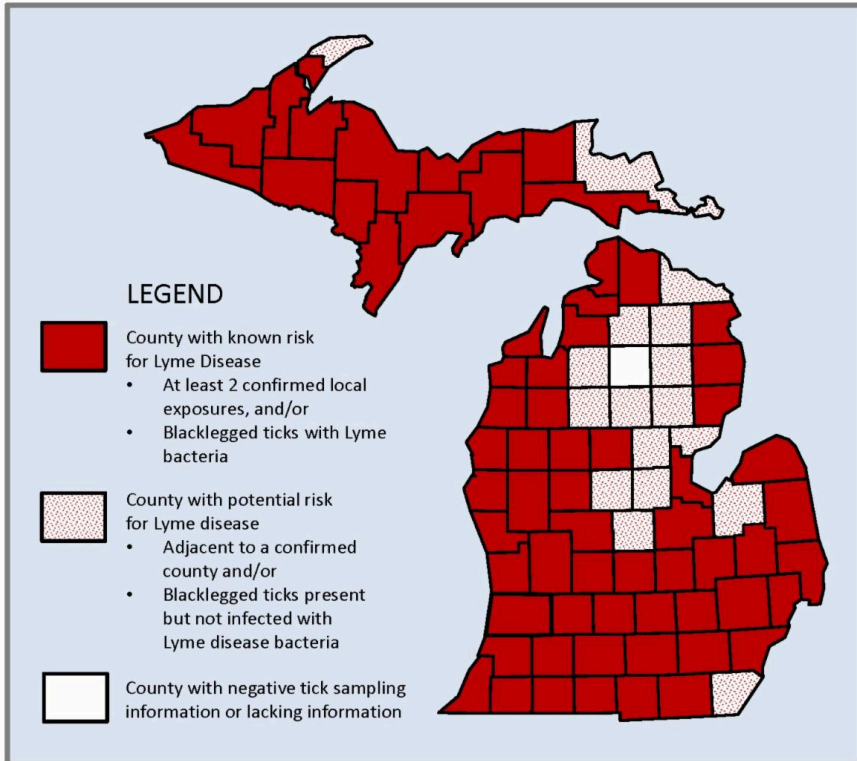
2026 Michigan Lyme Disease Risk Map

Lyme disease is an emerging disease transmitted by the blacklegged tick in Michigan. Local risk for Lyme disease varies depending on whether infected ticks are in the area. Several local and state agencies partner to conduct surveillance for Lyme disease in people and animals. The below map classifies risk based upon field collected and infected ticks and reported human cases of Lyme disease in Michigan (see the legend for specific criteria). The map is updated as new information becomes available.



Blacklegged ticks are active from March to November in Michigan. They are commonly found in wooded and brushy habitats.

For more information about Lyme disease prevention, visit www.michigan.gov/lyme



Updated March 2026



Ticks have been emerging already and we have seen a few cases of Lyme disease in March. Although tick exposure can occur year-round, they are most active from April to September.

To report Vector-Borne Illness, call your local office:

- **Branch County:**
(517) 279-9561 Ext 105
- **Hillsdale County:**
(517) 437-7395 Ext 307
- **St. Joseph County:** (269) 2732161 Ext 241

Links to additional resources:

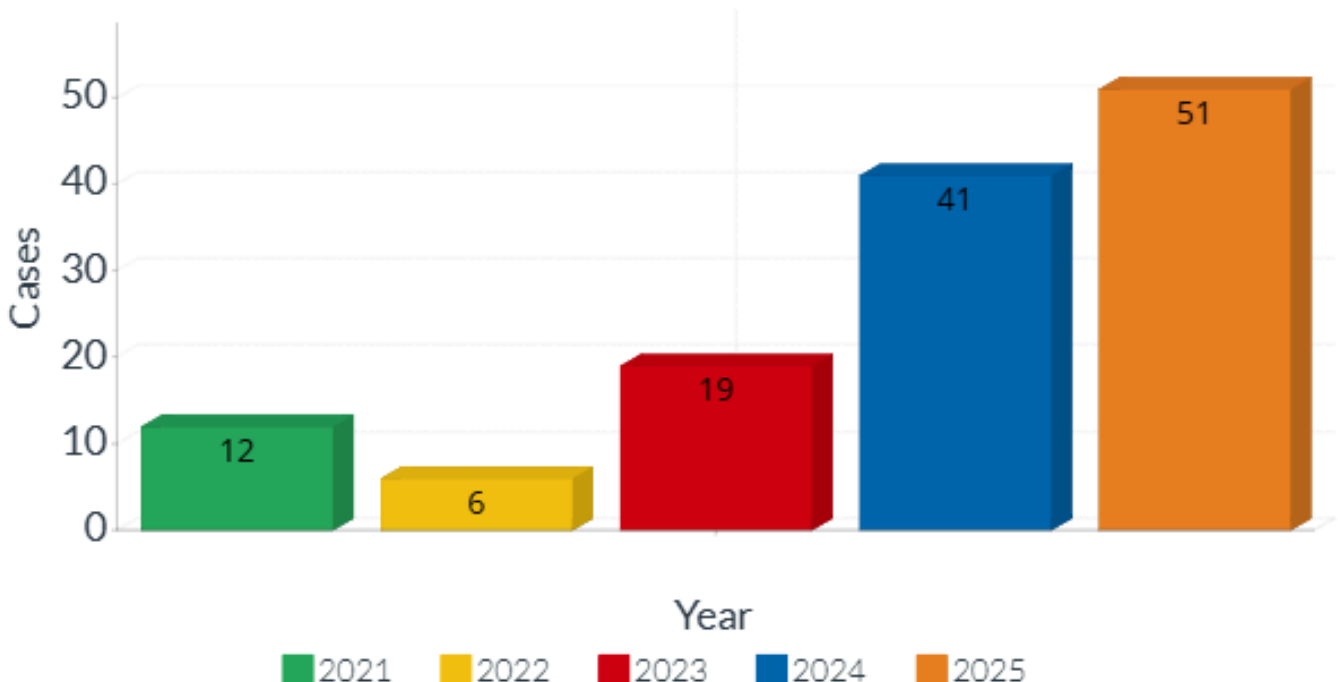
Tick-borne diseases in Michigan

Additional information on Ticks, Tick-related diseases, risks, prevention and removal.

In the jurisdiction lyme disease cases have increased substantially over the latest five-year period. Reported cases declined from 12 in 2021 to 6 in 2022, then rose sharply to 19 cases in 2023. This upward trend continued, with cases more than doubling to 41 in 2024 and increasing further to 51 in 2025.

Overall, Lyme disease cases increased more than fourfold from 2021 to 2025, indicating a growing public health concern. The sustained rise since 2023 suggests expanding risk in the area and highlights the need for continued surveillance, provider education, and public prevention efforts.

Reported Cases of Lymes Disease
Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties



Inclement Weather Preparedness

Prepare your business for a tornado.

Develop an emergency plan: Include details on suitable places to take shelter, policies to ensure all personnel are accounted for, and procedures for addressing hazardous materials on-site.



Identifying Shelter Locations

An underground area, such as a basement or storm cellar, provides the best protection from a tornado. If an underground shelter is unavailable, consider the following:

- Seek a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible
- Stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls
- Stay in the center of the room, and avoid corners because they attract debris
- Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick or block with no windows and a heavy concrete floor or roof system overhead
- Avoid auditoriums, cafeterias and gymnasiums that have flat, wide-span roofs.

Accountability Procedures

The following steps are recommended to help ensure the safety of personnel if a tornado occurs:

- Develop a system for knowing who is in the building in the event of an emergency
- Establish an alarm system to warn workers
 - Test systems frequently
 - Develop plans to communicate warnings to personnel with disabilities or who do not speak English
- Account for workers, visitors, and customers as they arrive in the shelter
 - Use a prepared roster or checklist
 - Take a head count
- Assign specific duties to workers in advance; create checklists for each specific responsibility. Designate and train alternates in case the assigned person is not there or is injured

-Stay informed: Monitor tornado watches and warnings, and be aware of the dangers of rapidly increasing wind speeds, dark and greenish skies, large hail and a loud roar.

Tornado WATCH: Means tornadoes are possible in and near your area. Be Ready to act fast!

Tornado WARNING: Means **Take Action!** A tornado is near. There is danger. Move to a safe location right away.

For more information, check out the links below:

Tornado Safety Tips

Tornado Preparedness

Thunderstorm Preparedness

Sign up for your local Emergency Alerts Linked Below

Branch County- Code Red

Hillsdale County- RAVE Alerts

2026 Michigan Communicable Disease Surveillance and Reports Changes

- Organized by Pathogen (**Color Print** or **Black & White** Print)

- Organized by Condition (**Color Print** or **Black & White Print**)

Brick-Book.pdf

The links below provide a summary of changes. Also attached is a updated resource that clarifies the reporting of select respiratory viruses in Michigan. All documents can be found under “Communicable Disease Reporting in Michigan” at www.michigan.gov/cdinfo.

Respiratory Virus Reporting Requirements

2026 Michigan Communicable Disease Surveillance and Reporting Changes

For inquiries regarding reportable diseases, reach out to **Heidi Hazel, Director of Personal Health & Disease Prevention**, at 517-279-9561 ext. 143.

Communicable Disease:

Measles: As of March 19th, 1487 confirmed cases were reported in the US for 2026. For the full year of 2025, a total of 2,280 cases were confirmed.

Recent outbreak in Washtenaw County

Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) is confirming a seventh case of measles in an unvaccinated child who was a close contact of the first case reported on March 11.

Unfortunately, this most recent case may have exposed others at a local health care facility.

Additionally, the suspect case announced on March 21 is now a confirmed case. This means the public exposure locations for March 17 (Washtenaw Community College and Kroger on Whittaker Rd) are confirmed as possible measles exposure locations.

Measles Provider Resources:

Link to: [Measles Frequently Asked Questions Providers](#)

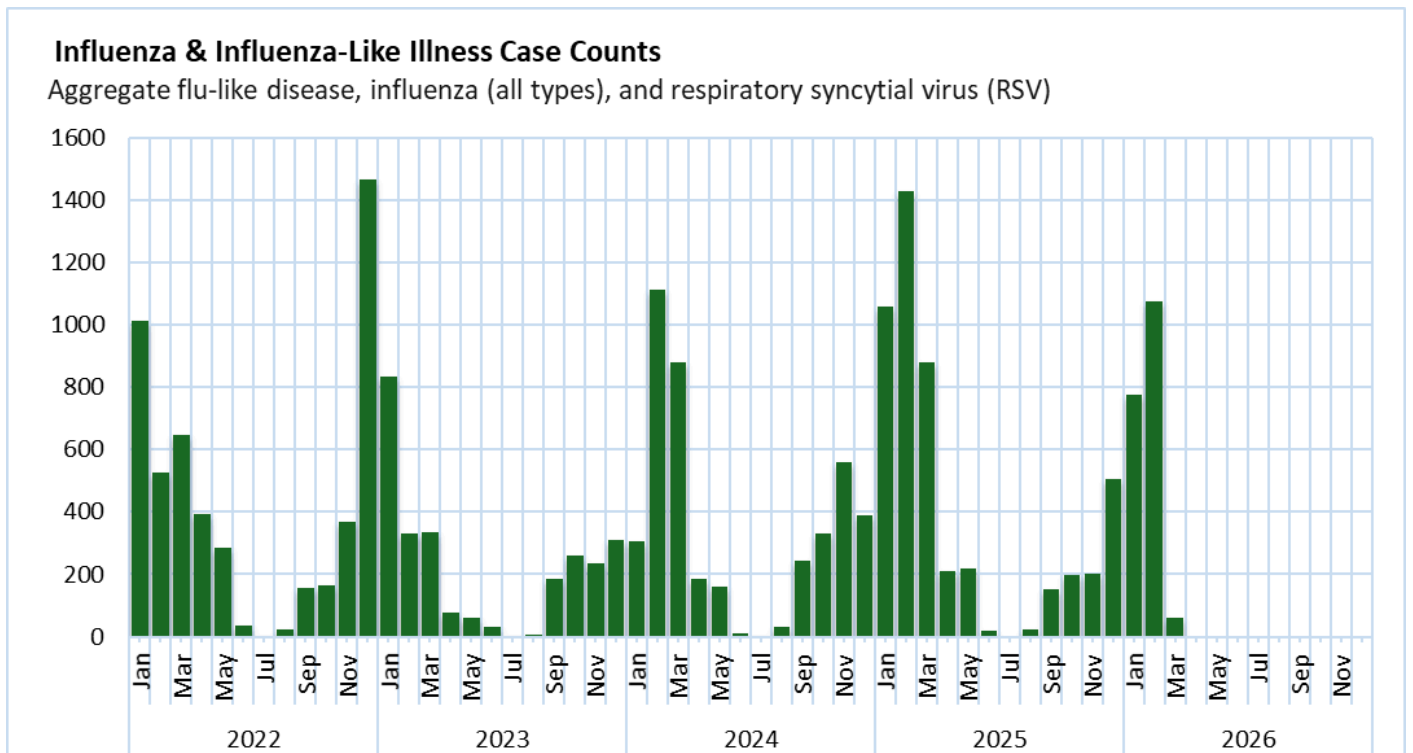
Link to: [CDC Clinical Overview of Measles](#)

Link to: [Measles CDC Fact Sheet](#)

Link to: [Factsheet: What to know about measles](#)

Influenza and Respiratory Update

Influenza and respiratory illness cases, including RSV, show a consistent winter peak each year, mostly between December and March. The largest surge occurred in early 2024, while 2023 was milder. Early 2025 trends indicate a typical flu season onset. These Patterns highlight the need for timely vaccination and continued vigilance for flu and RSV during the winter months.



Be Ready for Kindergarten in One Stop

Please share this flyer with families who have children entering Kindergarten or Young 5's. We will offer Hearing and Vision Screenings, Immunizations, and Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments on the dates and at the locations mentioned.



Be Ready for Kindergarten in One Stop!



Prepare your child for Kindergarten or Young 5's with Hearing and Vision Screening, Immunizations, and a Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment!

Coldwater

📍 570 Marshall Rd.

🕒 9 AM-3:30 PM

June 11

Coldwater

📍 570 Marshall Rd.

🕒 12 PM-6 PM

Aug 6

Sturgis

📍 1555 E. Chicago Rd, Suite C.

🕒 12 PM-6 PM

Aug 11

Coldwater

📍 570 Marshall Rd.

🕒 9:30 AM-3:30 PM

Aug 13

Appointments are required!

To schedule, please call 517-933-3035 or scan the QR code.



[Link to flyer](#) for families.

Universal Blood Lead Testing

In October 2023, two laws were passed that require physicians to: (1) test, or order a test, for lead in blood of minors at selected ages and with certain risk factors, and (2) ensure that test results are available in minors' certificates of immunization. Children must be tested at 12 months and 24 months of age or by 72 months of age (age 6) if there is no record of a previous test. If the child lives in one of the 82 high risk cities or townships, they must also be tested at 48 and 60 months of age.

See the links for more information

[Management of Blood Lead Test Results: Guidance for Health Care Providers](#)



Maternal/Infant Health:



New WIC Food Packages Starting March 2026

What is new?

More food choices.

Better support for healthy eating habits.

New options for different diets.



FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- More fruit and vegetable dollars instead of juice.
- Fresh cut herbs are allowed.



PEANUT BUTTER AND BEANS

- Families with specific dietary needs can choose other nut or seed butters.



DAIRY

- Choose between milk, cheese and yogurt, OR plant-based beverage or tofu.
- Yogurt included in all packages starting at 12 months.



WHOLE GRAINS

- More choices and sizes for whole grains like English muffins, bagels, pita, quinoa, wild rice, cornmeal and more.
- Included in all women packages.



EGGS

- Choose between eggs, tofu or peanut butter and beans.



FISH

- Included in all women and children packages.



INFANT FOODS

- Choose fruit and vegetable dollars starting at six months, instead of infant foods.

Ask WIC staff.

Learn about the new options and how to choose the best food package for your family.



Rev. 11.2025

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The new WIC Food Package launched in March 2026, offering more food choices, stronger support for healthy eating habits, and new options for various diets.

Links for Patient Resources:

[2025-2026 Income Guidelines Flyer](#)

[2026 Food Package Update Flyer](#)

Early On



**CONNECT EARLY.
REFER WITH
CONFIDENCE.**

A physician's guide to referring children ages 0-5 to early support services for better developmental outcomes.

**Early On
Birth-3 Early Intervention**

Refer if there are concerns about:

- Developmental delays or diagnosed medical conditions in infants or toddlers
- Missing milestones like walking, talking, or feeding

Services are provided in the child's natural environment, i.e., child's home or childcare.

Scan the QR code or visit 1800earlyon.org to make a referral.



**Build Up
3-5 Special Education**

Begin an inquiry if there are concerns about:

- Not meeting milestones and/or struggling to learn
- Social-emotional delays and/or behaviors that **interfere with learning**

Services are typically provided through the local school district in a preschool or childcare setting.

Scan the QR code or call 844-464-0005 to make an inquiry.



**Unsure or seeking other supports?
Refer to Help Me Grow.**

Help Me Grow is for families of all children **prenatal-5** who may need support with:

- Behavior concerns
- Parenting questions
- Preschool (free or tuition)
- Childcare
- Basic needs, like diapers or formula
- Home visiting
- Developmental screening
- Early On or Build Up referrals

We will chat with the family to understand their needs, make referrals, and follow up to ensure they're connected. You're busy; let us help.

Scan the QR code or call 844-464-0005 to start a referral today!



Our agency promotes and refers families to the Early On program, which supports infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) who may experience developmental delays or disabilities. The program focuses on development in key areas, including:

- Physical: Reaching, rolling, crawling, and walking
- Cognitive: Thinking, learning, and problem-solving
- Communication: Talking, listening, and understanding
- Social-Emotional: Feeling secure and playing with others
- Self-Help: Eating and dressing

Early On partners with families to use their daily routines to encourage their children's growth and development.

Links:

- [Early Online referral: Michigan Early Childhood: Home](#)
- [Early On-Michigan: Home](#)

The Overdose Prevention Engagement Network (OPEN) - Clinician to Clinician Consult Service

OPEN supports primary care, community providers, and hospital staff in Michigan who are managing patients with substance use disorders or complex pain.

- [Clinician to Clinician Consult Service – Michigan OPEN](#)
- [Free CME Opportunities – Michigan OPEN](#)

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