

Epi Update for Friday, May 1, 2026

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS)

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- Emergency room visits for tick bites higher than usual in Iowa
- *Cyclospora* positive stool? Send it to SHL!
- Infographic: Check your body for ticks after being outdoors

Emergency room visits for tick bites higher than usual in Iowa

In April 2026, emergency rooms (ERs) in Iowa saw more patients for tick bites than in recent years. This increase is consistent with the national pattern reported by the CDC last week, which showed that the weekly rate of ER visits for tick bites is the highest for this time of year since 2017. In Iowa, ER visits for tick bites usually peak in May.

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month. Taking steps to prevent tick bites can help prevent serious diseases they can cause, including Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and alpha-gal syndrome. Tick bites can be prevented by avoiding wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter, treating clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin, and using EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone.

After coming indoors, check clothes, gear, and pets for ticks. Showering within two hours of coming indoors has been shown to reduce the risk of getting Lyme disease and may also help reduce the risk of other tickborne diseases. Conduct a full-body check after returning from areas that may be tick-infested. If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove the tick as soon as possible.

If you develop symptoms such as a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, contact your health care provider and tell them about the recent tick bite, when it occurred, and where you were likely exposed.

For more information from CDC about preventing tick bites, visit www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html.

Cyclospora positive stool? Send it to SHL!

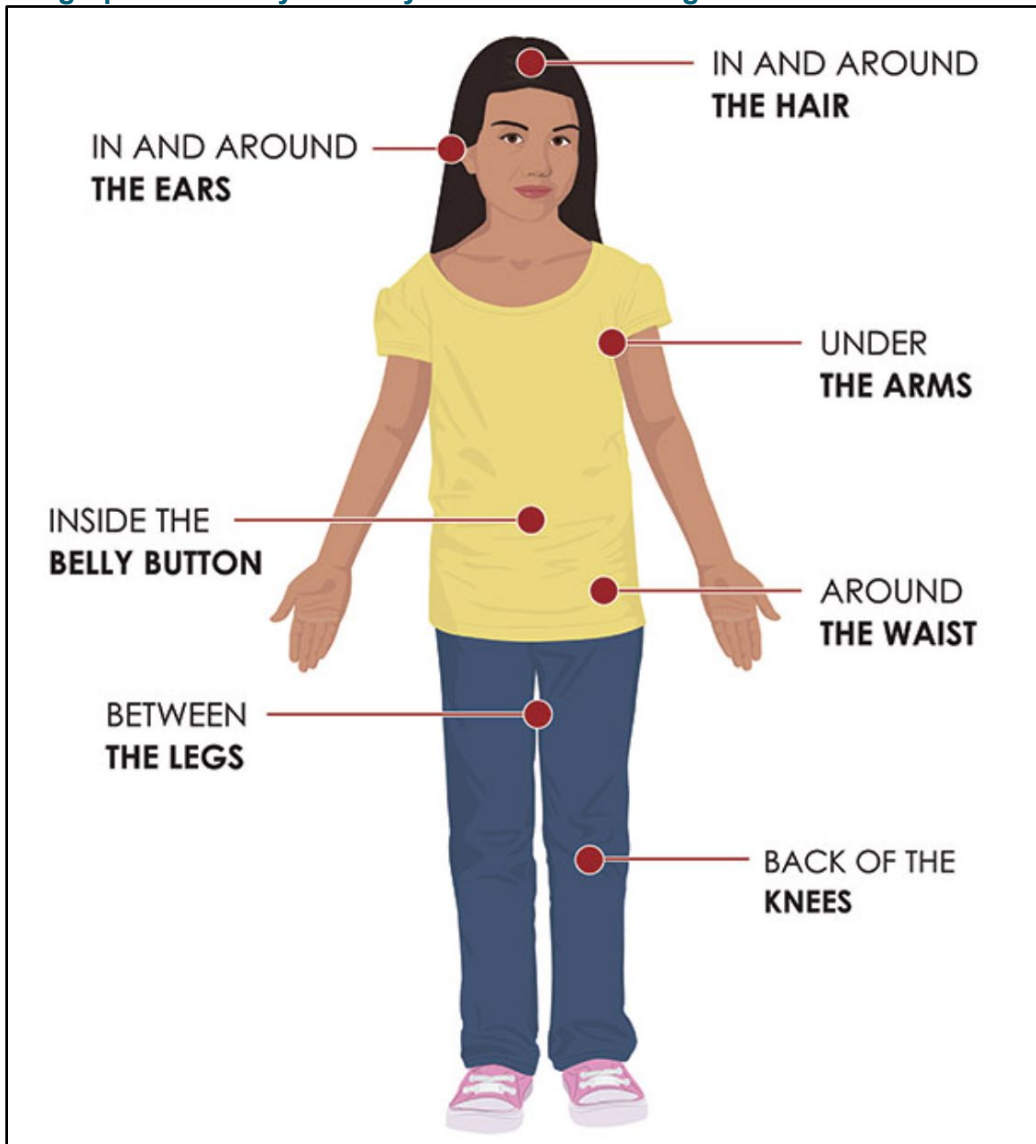
SHL and Iowa HHS are asking clinical labs that detect *Cyclospora* in stool specimens to forward the sample to SHL for genotyping at CDC. This request is being made as part of a national effort to better track and detect *Cyclospora* outbreaks in real-time.

Stool specimens must be preserved in Total Fix, ProtoFix, or SAF. Samples preserved in formalin are unacceptable for genotyping. To submit a specimen for *Cyclospora* genotyping, navigate to the *SHL Test Request Form* page at shl.uiowa.edu/testmenu/formgenerator.xml and select the test request form *Mycobacteriology/Mycology/Parasitology*. Scroll down and select your facility, then click submit. Complete the form with all relevant patient and specimen information. Select the Modified Acid-Fast Smear for Parasites test and write "positive *Cyclospora*" as well as the preservative used.

Questions regarding *Cyclospora* reporting should be directed to Iowa HHS at 515-242-5935. Questions regarding *Cyclospora* testing should be directed to the SHL Diagnostic Microbiology section at 319-335-4335.

For more information about *Cyclospora*, visit www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html.

Infographic: Check your body for ticks after being outdoors



To view in full size, visit www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention/index.html.

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
800-362-2736