

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Lyme Disease Update**
- **Giant Hogweed Alert**
- **Relocation Notice**

FROM:

David L. Mowat, MBChB MPH FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

Lyme Disease Update

Ontario has experienced an increase in human cases of Lyme disease and in the numbers and range of black-legged ticks, especially in the southern portions of the province. In 2009, there were seven confirmed human cases in Peel and 79 across the province.

As a result, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has developed a handout for health care providers identifying endemic areas and clinical information (see attached).

The province has also recently developed a Lyme disease website: www.ontario.ca/lyme. This website has information for health care professionals and the general public.

Lyme disease is a tick-borne disease caused by the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In Ontario, the disease is spread by the black-legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), also known as the deer tick.

Lyme disease is a reportable disease. All suspect and confirmed cases of Lyme disease should be reported immediately to Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.

Giant Hogweed Alert

Background

Giant Hogweed continues to grow in Peel Region in unmaintained, naturalized areas.

Giant hogweed has hollow stems with dark reddish-purple splotches and coarse white hair. The plant can grow up to 15 feet in height. The leaves of the plant can grow up to five feet in width and have hairs on the underside. The plant, which generates small white flowers, also produces flattened oval shaped fruit during summer months.

Contact with the plant's clear watery sap combined with exposure to light can cause significant dermatitis. In addition, contact with the eyes can cause temporary or permanent blindness.

Symptoms

Patients with the following symptoms should be questioned about possible exposure to giant hogweed:

- Phototoxic inflammatory eruption which usually appears 24 hours after exposure and peaks within 48-72 hours
- Initial burning erythema followed by blistering
- Pigmented purple and black scarring that may last for long periods.

Treatment

Treatment of the inflammatory condition should be based on severity of symptoms.

- Treat mild reactions with cool wet dressings, topical steroids, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Severe reactions should be treated in consultation with a dermatologist.

For more information about giant hogweed and phototoxic reaction, including photos of the plant, visit <http://www.peelregion.ca/health/topics/injury/giant-hogweed.htm>

Relocation Notice

Peel Public Health will be re-locating services based at 44 Peel Centre Drive, Brampton to 7120 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, this Fall (2010). Details on this move and its impact on physician services (e.g. vaccine order desk, vaccine pick-up locations, fax numbers for reporting communicable diseases) will be provided in upcoming Health Professionals Updates and reminder communications.