

# Communicable Disease Bulletin

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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



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## **WCHD Mission Statement:**

**To prevent disease, promote health and enlist the community in efforts to improve the health of all Winnebago County residents.**

## What "ticks" you off? - Ehrlichiosis



Ehrlichiosis is an infectious disease caused by various strains of *Ehrlichia* bacteria, transmitted to humans by ticks. It interferes with the body's immune system by attacking white blood cells, a vital part of the body's defense against invading bacteria, viruses, and other microbes or harmful substances. Untreated, the disease can leave people vulnerable to other infections.

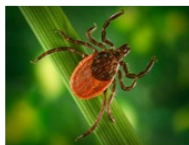
Ehrlichiosis does not spread from person to person. The *Ehrlichia* bacteria that cause the disease are spread through tick bites. The species that most commonly spread the disease are the lone star tick (1), the blacklegged tick (2), and the western black-legged tick(3).

Most cases of ehrlichiosis are associated with mild flulike symptoms, such as fever, chills, headaches, muscle or joint pain, nausea and vomiting, cough, stomach pain, and sore throat. Some people with the infection show no symptoms at all. Symptoms usually start within 2 weeks of a tick bite but can take up to a month to appear.



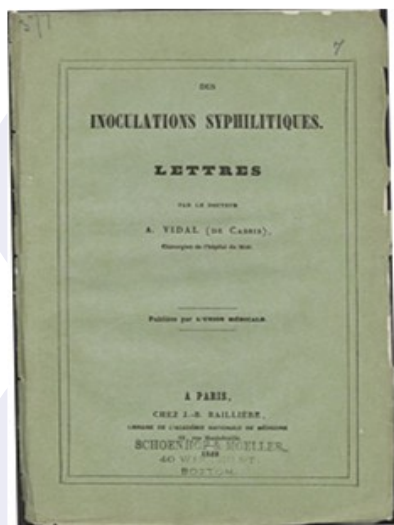
Because ehrlichiosis shares many symptoms with Lyme disease and other infections transmitted by ticks, diagnosis based on symptoms alone can be difficult. Blood tests are done to look for evidence of *Ehrlichia* infection, such as antibodies to the bacteria or the presence of the germ itself in the blood.

If treated early, ehrlichiosis responds very well to certain antibiotics. Over-the-counter medicine such as acetaminophen can help lower fever and relieve pain. Usually, people recover from mild cases of ehrlichiosis soon after finishing a week of antibiotic treatment. In severe cases, patients may need treatment in the hospital. Many cases of ehrlichiosis are mild, the infection can become serious if it is not treated. Some people who get ehrlichiosis develop anemia and inflammation of the liver and kidneys. Breathing problems, internal bleeding, encephalitis, and seizures can also develop. People with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV infection, certain types of cancer, or the elderly, tend to develop more severe symptoms and complications. For these people, ehrlichiosis can be fatal.



Avoiding direct contact with ticks is the best way to prevent ehrlichiosis. Experts recommend that people use tick repellent and wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts (to help find ticks more easily) and long pants tucked into socks when entering potentially tick-infested areas such as woods or campgrounds. After visiting such areas, it is wise to carefully check the body, clothes, and hair for ticks. Pets need to be checked as well.

## Syphilis: From 1494-2013

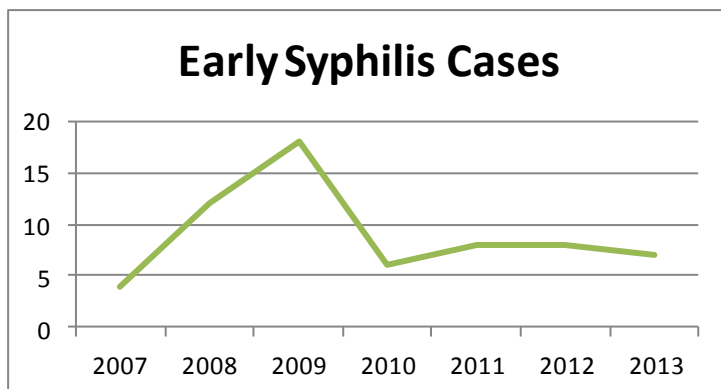


Syphilis was first reported in Europe in 1494 among soldiers (and their camp followers) involved in a war between France and Naples. Until the 19th century, syphilis was known by many different names, but the most common was the “French Disease.” Syphilis is generally believed to have come originally from the New World, imported into Europe by Christopher Columbus’s sailors after their famous voyage of 1492.

Bringing this disease into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, CDC estimates that, annually, 55,400 people in the United States get new syphilis infections. There were 46,042 reported new cases of syphilis in 2011, compared to 48,298 estimated new diagnoses of HIV infection and 321,849 cases of gonorrhea in 2011. Of new cases of syphilis, 13,970 cases were of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis, the earliest and most infectious stages of syphilis. In 2011, 72% of P&S syphilis occurred among men who have sex with men. There were also 360 reports of children with congenital syphilis in 2011.

Syphilis is transmitted from person to person by direct contact with syphilis sores. Sores occur mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus, or in the rectum. Sores also can occur on the lips and in the mouth. The average time between infection with syphilis and appearance of the first symptom is 21 days, but it can range from 10 to 90 days. Syphilis can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sexual contact. Pregnant women can also pass the infection to their unborn child.

Oral, anal, vaginal, or penile syphilis sores make it easier to transmit and acquire HIV. A person is 2 to 5 times more likely to get HIV if exposed when syphilis sores are present. Many of the individuals identified with syphilis are also co-infected with HIV.



A blood test is the most common way to determine if someone has syphilis. Shortly after infection, the body produces syphilis antibodies that can be detected by an accurate, safe, and inexpensive blood test. In Winnebago County, 8 cases of early syphilis were diagnosed in 2012. Preliminary data indicates that 7 cases have been identified in 2013. 57% of those reported in 2013 are men reporting having sex with men.

### Communicable Disease Statistics

Disease Type	2012	2013*	Disease Type	2012	2013*
Chickenpox	20	2	Hepatitis C-chronic	66	56
Cryptosporidiosis	1	0	Histoplasmosis	0	1
Ehrlichiosis	0	0	Lyme disease	23	33
Enteric e. coli	0	0	Neisseria Meningitis	4	4
Giardiasis	5	4	Pertussis (whooping cough)	4	5
Haemophilus Influenzae, inv.	2	2	Potential Human Rabies Exposure	1	0
Hepatitis A	2	2	Rubella	0	0
Hepatitis B-acute	2	1	Salmonellosis	15	6
Hepatitis B-chronic	6	5	Shigellosis	1	0
*Preliminary year to date data			West Nile Virus	0	0