Powassan Virus, a Deadly Tick Disease

Lyme disease is not the only disease spread by ticks. Powassan is scarier and deadlier than it’s predecessor. And it’s spreading.

Unlike Lyme disease, a bacterial infection, Powassan is a virus, one that can cause encephalitis, a brain infection that is often fatal.

History of Powassan

The Powassan virus was discovered in 1958 in Powassan, Ontario. Since that time, two types of the virus have been found in North America, with fewer than 60 cases attributed to the virus from 1958-2010, though it is possible that cases of viral encephalitis or meningitis were not identified as Powassan and this numbers somewhat underreported. The concern, however, comes from the fact that 22 cases of Powassan were reported between 2008-2013 in Minnesota alone. A new variant of the virus has spread to deer ticks and cases are showing up in New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts. These numbers suggest a definite spread of this disease in the wild.

Powassan Infection and Symptoms

Powassan is spread by tick bites; it is not spread from person to person. When a person is bitten by a tick that transmits Lyme disease, the tick transfers the bacteria over a 24-hour period. When a person is bitten by a tick with Powassan virus, transmitting the virus takes no more than an hour.

The incubation period varies from one week to one month. There are people who are infected with this virus who never exhibit symptoms. For those who do, symptoms include difficulty with

speech and loss of coordination, fever, vomiting, confusion, weakness, headache, hallucinations, and seizures. The virus can result in encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the spinal cord and the brain).

There is no cure or specific treatment for the virus. For severe cases, hospitalization and supportive treatment (IV, respiratory support, medications to reduce brain swelling) are given.

According to the CDC, 10% of encephalitis cases caused by Powassan are fatal and half of the survivors suffer from permanent neurological symptoms such as memory problems, muscle wasting, and headaches.

Prevention of Tick Bites

The CDC suggests staying on paths in the woods and avoiding the bushy, overgrown areas with high grass. Their most prudent advice is to thoroughly inspect your body (everywhere, including the belly button and your hair) after being in woodsy areas. Inspect pets and gear as well. Run clothes through a drying cycle to kill ticks that may be attached.

The conventional suggestion is to wear long sleeves and long pants tucked into socks and to spray clothing and gear with toxic repellents; however, natural alternatives are available.

Natural Tick Repellents

Several essential oils repel ticks. A few drops of rose geranium, one behind each knee, on each ankle, and behind the neck will convince ticks you are not a good meal.

There are a number of essential oils that repel ticks and mosquitoes as well. Nan Martin of Experience Essential Oils recommends this recipe for dogs and humans:

Tick Spritz Recipe

- 1 cup of Distilled water
- 2 Drops Geranium Essential Oil
- 2 Drops Palo Santo Essential Oil
- 1 Drop Myrrh Essential Oil
- 4 Drops Grapefruit Essential Oil
- 1 Drop Peppermint Essential Oil
- 1 Drop of Thieves Hand Soap or Castile Soap (emollient)

Place in a spray bottle and shake. Spritz when needed

(Don't use essential oils on cats!)

Anti-Virus Protocol

If you have been bitten by a tick, this is the time to follow the healthiest and cleanest diet. Remember that sugar feeds viruses and bacteria. There are several natural means to boost your immune system. Check out *How Viruses Work and How to Prevent Them Naturally* and *Make Your Immune System Bulletproof With These Natural Remedies.*

Sources:

- *Deadly New Tick-Borne Illness Spreading in New England* – NECN
- *Powassan Virus* – CDC
- *Powassan – Tick-Borne Terror Virus Or Too Much Media Hype?* – Forbes
- *Powassan Virus Human 2014 (Map)* – USGS
- *Powassan (POW) Virus Basics* – Minnesota Department of Health
- *What Is Powassan Virus? Rare Tick Infection Could Be Worse Than Lyme Disease* – International Business Times
- *Repel Ticks With This Natural Oil – Organic Lifestyle Magazine (Reprint from Natural News)*
- *Tick Repellent for Dogs is Stress Free with Essential*

Oils – Experience Essential Oils