

Massachusetts tick season has arrived: first confirmed case of deadly Powassan virus reported

Massachusetts has its first reported and confirmed case of the potentially deadly Powassan virus in Sharon. State officials are warning warns residents to take precautions against the tick-borne disease.

Mass.gov explains the virus, "Powassan virus causes a rare, but often serious disease, and is spread by the bite of tiny, infected black-legged (deer) ticks. There are two types of Powassan virus in the United States. One type is found in ticks that normally feed on woodchucks (groundhogs); the second type is carried by black-legged ticks, the same ticks that can also carry the germs that cause Lyme disease, babesiosis and anaplasmosis."

Powassan virus is spread by the bite of an infected tick and can spread from the tick into a person after only a short time of attachment, so it's crucial to check yourself frequently when walking, on hikes, gardening, etc. You may not notice symptoms since they take minimum of a week to manifest and in some cases, up to a month.

Symptoms/signs include confusion, fever, headache, loss of coordination, seizures, speech difficulties, vomiting, and weakness. In severe cases, one may experience encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, or meningitis, an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. 10% of those who contract the severe form of the disease will die and survivors may have long-term health problems.

Unfortunately, there is no treatment once infected and one can

only drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration and get plenty of rest.

The CDC tracks cases and provides data and maps. You can visit their page and see current data here

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