

For Your Health:

# Preventing Tick-Borne Diseases

Sydney Keiler, Director of Development and Communications

*May 2025*

---

Here in Columbia and Greene Counties, we are experiencing all signs of spring and summer — warmer weather, a steady increase in weekend visitors, and greener grasses and budding plants. Although often beautiful to look at, hidden in the new tall grasses is something that residents of the Twin Counties know can pose a serious threat to the health of adults, children and pets: TICKS.

If you live in Columbia and Greene Counties, then you likely already know that we have some of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the State. In 2023, the Twin Counties had a rate of 330.5 cases of Lyme Disease for every 100,000 residents, almost twice as high as in the rest of Upstate NY! But Lyme Disease isn't the only concern; other tick-borne diseases are also prevalent in the Twin Counties and on the rise. In 2023, both Columbia and Greene Counties had some of the highest rates in the state for Anaplasmosis (162.35 cases/100,000, over 9 times as high as the rest of Upstate NY) and for Babesiosis (75.9 cases/100,000, over 8 times as high as the rest of Upstate NY! In short, anyone living in the Twin Counties has a greater risk of infection from these tick-borne diseases than most other residents of NYS (which, as a whole, has some of the highest rates for these tick-borne diseases of any state in the country).

As many people with experience of these diseases will tell you, they are no fun. Even a relatively short-lived infection requires a healthcare interaction and a prescription medication, with the accompanying costs, and often, a number of accommodations for both symptoms of the disease and the medication taken to treat it. Then there seems to be that subset of people who struggle with serious, long-term infections that become, essentially, a chronic disease. For these poor people, the diagnosis of a tick-borne disease can be a life-altering event.

It is therefore much better to prevent these tick-borne diseases in the first place and landscaping to create a "Tick-Safe Zone" can actually be an important prevention tool. A Tick-Safe Zone is an area around the space where you, your loved ones, and your pets are most likely to live, work and play. Typically, its center is the home, and the Zone extends some distance from it; how big it is depends on where your habits take you and also on how much space you can reasonably maintain. To create a Tick-Free Zone, do the following: regularly clear tall grasses and brush around your home and at the edge of lawns; mow frequently and keep leaves raked (leaf litter and other plant debris are favorite stomping grounds for ticks); place patios, decks, play areas, and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation, and in sunny spots if possible (since ticks have trouble surviving in the sun); create a 3-ft barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas and around patios and play equipment to keep ticks from migrating into the places where people and pets are most likely to be; remove any old furniture, mattresses, or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.

Property maintenance isn't the only strategy for preventing tick-borne diseases—carefully dressing in long socks, pants and sleeves, using a repellent on skin and clothing, and making frequent and thorough tick checks are all terribly important—but do not neglect the opportunity to limit your exposure to ticks, and that of the people and pets around you, by landscaping with prevention of tick-borne diseases in mind.

---

The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit [www.columbiahealthnet.org](http://www.columbiahealthnet.org) or call 518-822-8820.