



Winnebago County

Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

March 25, 2026

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Powassan Virus Found In Ticks From Winnebago County.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY – The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) encourages residents to take steps to prevent tick bites and watch for symptoms of illness after being outside in the yard or walking in wooded or grassy areas. For the first time, ticks from Winnebago County have tested positive for **Powassan virus**.

There is no vaccine for Powassan virus which can lead to serious health complications impacting the heart, skeletal, and nervous systems. The key is to prevent tick bites.

Symptoms of Powassan virus include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Weakness
- Confusion or altered mental state
- Difficulty speaking
- Seizures
- Paralysis

Initial symptoms like fever and headache may come first, followed by more severe symptoms like seizure and confusion. If you have symptoms, contact your healthcare provider and provide any information on tick bites and/or tick exposures.

Take steps to prevent tick bites:

- Avoid high tick locations such as wooded areas or areas with tall grass and weeds.
- Wear long, light-colored clothing including socks, shoes, and pants when outdoors.
- Apply insect repellents approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Consult a physician before using on infants.
 - For children, only use repellents containing 10% or less of DEET and do not let children apply alone.
 - Always follow label directions.
- Reduce ticks in yards
 - Place a 3ft wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas.
 - Construct fences to discourage animals (such as deer and raccoons) from entering.
 - Remove leaves, furniture, mattresses, or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.
- Perform regular tick checks while outdoors by scanning your legs and arms for climbing ticks.
 - Don't forget to regularly check your pets for ticks, too.

For more information on tickborne diseases, visit the Illinois Department of Public Health's Illinois Tickborne Disease Dashboard at <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/26e3d88ec699400ea4324272a43a49cb?org=idph> or visit the WCHD website at publichealth.wincoil.gov

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