



# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY Public Health Laboratory

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www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab

## SPECIMEN COLLECTION & TRANSPORT INSTRUCTIONS

### Tick Identification and Lyme Disease Testing

The western black-legged tick (*Xodes pacificus*) is the only tick species in California that is known to transmit Lyme Disease. Ticks are parasites that are dependent on the blood of humans and animals. If bitten by an infected deer tick, humans and animals can be infected and may develop Lyme Disease which is caused by a spirochete bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

Deer Ticks in the young or nymph stage are about the size of a poppy seed. Because of their small size, these juvenile ticks are most likely to bite humans and are the main source of transmitting Lyme Disease. Nymphs are primarily active in March-August (Summer). Adult ticks are most commonly found in October through June (Winter/Spring). In order for the transmission of the Lyme disease spirochete to occur the tick must remain attached for approximately 24-72 hours.

#### A. Removal of attached tick:

1. If possible have someone else remove the tick from you.
2. Use tweezers or forceps, not your fingers.
3. If you must touch the tick, use a tissue to protect your hand.
4. Grasp the tick's mouth parts as close to the skin as possible
5. Gently pull the tick straight out, steadily and firmly.
6. Do not twist or jerk the tick *If the mouth parts of the tick break off and remain in the skin, consult a Physician.*
7. Place the whole tick in a small sealed zip lock bag or a clean plastic jar with a lid.
8. Add a piece of paper towel that is moistened with water to the container if you are not able to bring the tick in within 48 hrs.

Bring the tick specimen to the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory, 2191 Johnson Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA with a Check made out to **Santa Clara Public Health for \$15.00**

#### B. Acceptable Specimens:

- ❖ **A whole intact tick that is not dried out.**

#### C. Rejection Criteria:

- ❖ A tick that is dried out, head and body parts missing, crushed, or damaged so that the condition of the tick make it unusable to be identified and/or unacceptable for testing.

Reports from the test performed by the Santa Clara Public Health Laboratory normally take a week to ten days and arrive via US Postal Service to the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory. Copies of the report will be mailed to you

Deliver to: San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory, 2191 Johnson Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401