

The clocks have gone forward and Spring has sprung



Hopefully, you will be able to get out and about now the days are getting longer and warmer. Regular physical activity, especially outdoors, has lots of physical and mental health benefits.

Throughout Lancashire you have access to Country parks and lots of green spaces, [Countryside - Lancashire County Council](#).

We want you to enjoy the outdoors in our wonderful County safely. So, there are a few things which, whilst uncommon, it's better to be aware of and take the necessary preventative action so you can enjoy the outdoors safely.

Ticks and Lyme disease



Ticks are small, spider-like creatures, usually between 1mm to 1cm long with 6 or 8 legs and are found in many outdoor environments but are particularly common in woodland or grassy areas.

Whilst ticks are most active in Spring and Summer, they can be found all year. Ticks can carry and spread a bacterial infection, called Lyme disease to humans, this is usually identified by a circular or oval red rash which usually develops within a few weeks or can take a few months.

Other symptoms include

- High temperature, feeling hot and shivery;
- Headache;
- Muscle and joint pain and tiredness.

What YOU can do to keep safe and help prevent infection

- Cover your skin while walking outdoors and tuck your trousers into your socks.
- Use insect repellent on your clothes and skin - products containing DEET are best. (DEET is the most common active ingredient in insect repellents).
- Stay on clear paths whenever possible and avoid brushing against vegetation.
- Wear light-coloured clothing so ticks are easier to see and brush off.

Not all ticks carry Lyme disease but after spending time outside, it's very important to check yourself and others, including clothing and pets, for ticks and to **safely** remove them as soon as possible if you find one on your skin.

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers or a tick-removal tool. You can buy these from some pharmacies, vets, and pet shops.
2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
3. Slowly pull upwards, taking care not to squeeze or crush the tick. Dispose of it when you have removed it.
4. Clean the bite with antiseptic or soap and water.



For more information visit: [What is Lyme disease and why do we need to be tick-aware? - UK Health Security Agency \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2015/05/14/what-is-lyme-disease-and-why-do-we-need-to-be-tick-aware/)

Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed looks like Cow Parsley but can grow to 10ft tall. It is often found on riverbanks and contact with skin can cause blisters and severe burns. It has thick bristly stems that are often purple blotched with white flat topped flower clusters in June/July.



If you have been affected, wash any skin as soon as possible with soapy water and seek medical help. For further information and to report a Giant Hogweed problem contact your local Council.



Weil's disease (Leptospirosis)



Thankfully, Leptospirosis is rare in the UK, but knowing about the symptoms if you've been playing in or near water is a good idea. It's an infection spread in the urine of infected animals, commonly rats, mice, pigs and dogs.

You can get Leptospirosis if freshwater - usually from a river, canal, lake or pond that contains urine, gets into your mouth, eyes or a cut. This is more likely when taking part in water-based activities like kayaking, outdoor swimming, and fishing but children (or adults) playing near ponds or slow-moving water may also be at risk.

Most people who get Leptospirosis have no symptoms or mild flu-like symptoms, but some people can become seriously ill. If you become unwell or develop symptoms after playing near or in water, see your Doctor.

Symptoms include: -

- High temperature;
- Headache/tummy/body aches and pains;
- Feeling or being sick.



Good practice to reduce your chances of getting Weil's disease

- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling animals or animal products.
- Cover any cuts and grazes with waterproof plasters.
- Shower as soon as possible if you've been in potentially infected water.

For more information visit: - [Leptospirosis \(Weil's disease\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/leptospirosis/)

Animal farms and petting zoos



Trips to farms or petting zoos can be a fun and educational day out, especially for children. It's important however, to remember that farm animals can be a source of infection that if passed to humans can cause illness, some of which can be serious for young children and especially harmful for pregnant women and their unborn baby.

These bugs can cause diarrhoea and stomach pains, and in serious cases can lead to severe illness. Infections can be picked up from the animal's body, its poo or from areas where animals have recently been. Even if your hands look clean, you can't see the germs if they are on your hands and by touching your face you could accidentally pass them to your mouth.

It's in YOUR hands - What you can do to stay safe visiting a farm

Farms provide handwashing facilities and by following this simple advice you can keep you and your children safe.

- Wash hands **thoroughly** with soap and water after touching animals, fences or other surfaces in animal areas and VERY importantly before eating or drinking and only eat in picnic or café areas.
- Try not to touch your face or put fingers in mouths whilst petting animals or walking round the farm and avoid kissing animals.
- Avoid eating or drinking while touching animals or walking round the farm and don't eat anything that has fallen on the floor.

Pollen and Hay fever



Hay fever is a common allergy causing sneezing, coughing and itchy eyes. Symptoms are usually worse between late March and September when the pollen count is at its highest, but with a changing climate the pollen season may start earlier than expected.



Some top tips to help ease your symptoms

- Put petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline) around your nostrils to trap pollen.
- Shower and change your clothes after being outside to wash pollen off.
- Keep windows and doors shut as much as possible.

A Pharmacist can give advice and suggest the best treatment to help with your symptoms, these may be antihistamine eye drops, nasal sprays or tablets.

For more information visit: - [Hay fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

For further information and support on health protection, please contact the Lancashire County Council Health Protection Team via email at healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk

Sources are adapted from various public health protection and safety materials, a list of which is available.

