

**Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de la Santé  
et des Soins de longue durée**

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Dear colleague:

Today Ontario launched *Combating Lyme Disease Through Collaborative Action: Ontario's 10-Step Education and Awareness Plan*, to advance our government's efforts to protect the people of Ontario from Lyme disease. It can be found at:

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/lyme\\_16/lyme\\_16.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/lyme_16/lyme_16.aspx).

This Plan aims to improve public awareness and expand opportunities for physicians to improve timely diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease in its early stages. It was developed in collaboration with stakeholders in the public health and health care sectors, as well as advocacy groups representing patients with Lyme disease.

As you are aware, the diagnosis of Lyme disease, particularly in the early stages, is primarily based on clinical symptoms and risk factors as assessed by physicians. Signs and symptoms can include: fever, chills, headache, rash, fatigue, muscle/joint aches; problems with your heartbeat, breathing, balance, and short-term memory.

In the early stages of this infection, results of laboratory diagnostic tests provide only supportive evidence, and not the sole evidence for a diagnosis. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care emphasizes that physicians should exercise their own clinical judgement to diagnose Lyme disease and treat it without positive laboratory test results when clinically warranted. As with treatment protocols for any disease, you are encouraged to follow clinical practice guidelines developed by specialist bodies. The Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) has recently issued a Lyme disease posting which can be found at: <http://ocfp.on.ca/communications/blog/ocfp-blog/2016/07/06/lyme-disease-keeping-it-top-of-mind>.

As the science and clinical management of this complex illness continue to evolve, both in relation to diagnostic testing and clinical management, my ministry is committed to putting patients first by ensuring that Ontario physicians have access to the most up-to-date information on hand.

We greatly appreciate the input received from the OCFP regarding your questions and concerns about Lyme disease. This information contributes to our understanding of the day-to-day realities of those living with this complicated disease and the needs of physicians in the provision of evidence-based care.

Thank you for what you do every day on the front lines of our health care system and my sincere gratitude to you for your commitment to improving the health of Ontarians.

Yours sincerely,

(Original Signed By)

Dr. Eric Hoskins  
Minister