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Northeast's first dedicated tick clinic opens on Long Island

HAMPTON BAYS, N.Y. - The Northeast's first dedicated tick clinic opened Monday on Long Island to treat tick bites and diagnose tickborne illnesses.

It's located in Suffolk County, where there's been a significant rise in tick bites and infections.

Marina Rutherford brought her little ones to the region's first tick-borne disease clinic, along with bags of ticks she found where her kids play.

"They're just everywhere. Every time I do another check or another bath, I find more," Rutherford said. "It's terrifying."

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Rutherford was one of the clinic's first visitors, It's now open as an office after years of operating as just a hotline. Stony Brook Southampton Hospital's Resource Center will diagnose children and adults.

"There are other diseases that can mimic lyme disease. It's important to think about them, order the right tests, know how to interpret those tests and then treat," Dr. Sharon Nachman, director of pediatric infectious diseases at Stony Brook Medicine.

The center will house specialists and a powerful microscope for tick identification.

"We are one stop shopping for all things tick," Karen Wulfeffrat, the clinic's administrator said. "Seeing a doctor and getting a definitive diagnosis, lab test if you need it. We also have tick removal kits that we give you."

Along with education.

- **Related:** [With tick-borne diseases spreading on Long Island, Sen. Schumer announces \\$160 million for research and eradication](#)

Suffolk had nearly 2,700 cases of Lyme disease last year - a five-fold increase over 2021. Lyme disease is on the rise nationwide, and celebrities have gone public with the potentially crippling effects.

"There are days you wake up and you know you're not going to function well. You wake up dizzy, you may be nauseous, bad headache, aches," Jane Held said.

Held, after a decade of Lyme disease symptoms, is also battling alpha gal, a serious allergic condition caused by a lone star tick bite.

"Ticks are spreading, and particularly the lone star, spreading the fastest. And it's a very aggressive tick. It will seek you out," Held said.

- **Related:** [New York health department urges everyone to avoid illnesses spread by ticks and mosquitoes](#)

An early, accurate diagnosis is key.

"The longer you have an infection, the more side effects, or chronicity, you will have," Nachman said.

The tick-borne disease center will operate year-round by appointment.
There is no off-season - these diseases can become apparent in the winter after going untreated.

The regional tick-borne disease center was made possible possible through charitable gifts. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).