

Title: Summer Flu? It Might Not Be What You Think

As a medical student training in the Adirondacks over the summer, I saw many patients with different illnesses. One patient came to the emergency room with terrible chills, body aches, nausea, and a high fever. They thought they had the flu, but were confused as it was not flu season. After some discussion, I found out this patient spent a lot of time outdoors in their garden. Although they had not noticed any tick bites, we tested for illness caused by ticks. They tested positive for anaplasmosis.

Ticks are tiny, easy to miss, and unfortunately, more and more common around Upstate New York. The change in weather patterns over the past several years has made it so tick season lasts longer and happens in more places. Most people have heard of Lyme disease, but there's another tick-borne disease, anaplasmosis, that's been showing up in test ticks more often in recent years.

The worst part of anaplasmosis is how it feels: Most patients feel really worn down. Fever, chills, headache, body aches – it can feel just like the flu. Some people also feel nauseous. The sickness usually kicks in a week or two after a bite, if you notice a bite at all.

The good news is, anaplasmosis is treatable. Doctors usually prescribe an antibiotic called doxycycline, and most people recover quickly once they start it.

If you spend time outdoors, the best advice is just to try to avoid bites in the first place. Wear long sleeves, pants, high socks, and maybe some bug spray. When you get home, do a quick check: Ticks like hiding in spots like behind your ears, under your arms, or in your hair. Don't forget to check pets too, since they can bring ticks inside.

If you do find a tick, take it off as soon as you can with tweezers or a tick remover, grabbing as close to the skin as possible. You can save the tick and send it to be tested at the [Upstate Tick Testing Laboratory](#). Call your doctor to see if you should schedule an appointment, and then keep an eye on how you feel over the next couple of weeks.

If something feels off, whether fever, fatigue, rash, or just anything unusual, it's worth calling your doctor. When you are outside this summer, hiking, gardening, or even just walking through tall grass, don't forget about ticks!