

Red Cross study looking for tick disease in blood supply

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SAINT PAUL, Minn. -- Maybe you found one crawling on you over Memorial Day weekend. It is tick season here in Minnesota.

And now the [American Red Cross](#) is conducting a new study, looking for evidence of a tick borne disease in the blood supply.

Deer ticks not only transmit Lyme Disease, they can also transmit a parasite called Babesia which can cause a flu-like illness called Babesiosis.

Babesia can also be transmitted through the blood supply.

So this summer, the American Red Cross is conducting a new study to determine its prevalence in the blood supply. About 2,000 samples of blood from donors will be taken this summer and sent out for

testing to look for evidence of Babesia.

Dr. David Mair, medical director for American Red Cross Blood Services in Saint Paul said, "Hopefully we may learn about how frequent it may be in our donor base here. But also this will hopefully contribute to a larger study that would happen as a next step and ultimately lead to an approved test for screening blood donors."

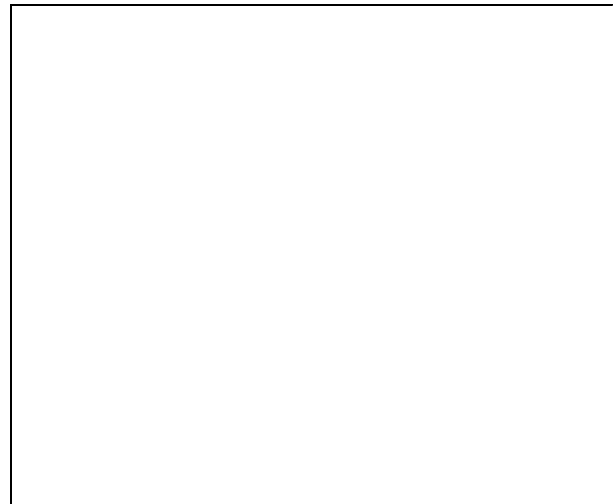
While some of those who get Babesia through a deer tick bite may not even show symptoms of Babesiosis, in people with compromised immune systems, Babesiosis can be severe, killing red blood cells.

Mair said while rare, there have been cases where Babesia has been transmitted through transfusion.

The hope is to eventually develop a test so that blood donations infected with Babesia can be removed from the blood supply.

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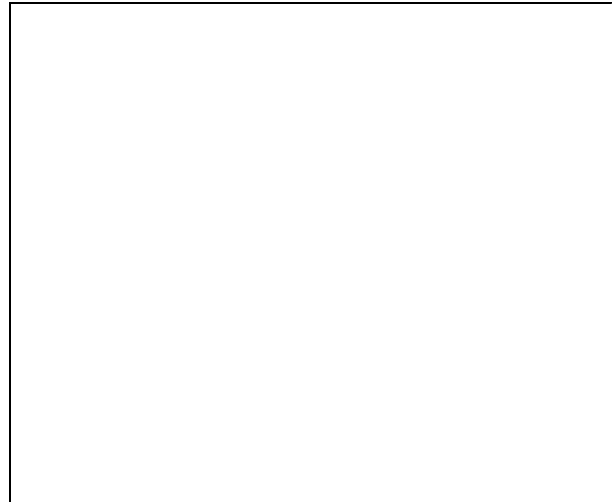


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