

Disability Campaign.org

Lyme disease Information



Image: Macleans.ca

What is Lyme disease?

According to MayoClinic.com, "Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne illness in North America and Europe." This disease is transmitted through the bite of a tick infected with the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

Blacklegged ticks (deer ticks) can harbor this bacteria and spread it; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in most cases, the tick must be attached for 36-48 hours or more before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted.

Lyme disease is not transmitted from person-to-person. Contact with pets that have Lyme disease does not cause transmission, although pets can bring infected ticks into the home. Moreover, not all ticks carry the bacterium, but it's best to know preventative measures as well as what to do if you were to get bit by a tick.

Risk factors for contracting Lyme disease

- Travel or residence in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the U.S.
- Adults who work outdoors
- Children who spend time outdoors
- Hiking or camping in heavily wooded areas

- Pets that are outdoors and in the home
- Wearing short-sleeve shirts or shorts while outdoors
- Improperly removing a tick (see removal instructions below)

Symptoms of Lyme disease

- **Rash.** The rash may first appear as a small, red bump and later develop into a bull's-eye pattern (see image). But the rash itself is not a sole symptom for diagnosis.
- **Flu-like symptoms.** This includes fever, chills, fatigue, body aches, and/or a headache. Seek medical help if you experience flu-like symptoms in the summer or in addition to a rash.
- **As the infection spreads, new symptoms may develop.** If you experience joint pain, neurological problems (temporary paralysis, numbness, or muscle weakness), or severe fatigue, you need to seek immediate medical help.



Image: CDC.gov

How to prevent tick bites

1. If you will be outdoors, especially in the summer, avoid wooded areas with high grass and walk in the center of trails.
2. Use repellent that contains 20-30% DEET and wear long-sleeved clothing.
3. Shower as soon as possible after coming indoors.
4. Check your body in front of a full-length mirror. Check under the arms, around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, and brush your hair. Adults should do this for children who have been outdoors.
5. Check pets to make sure they are not introducing ticks into the home. Preferably, use flea and tick medication on your pets to prevent ticks from entering your home.
6. Wash and dry clothes on high heat to kill any remaining ticks that may have attached to clothing.

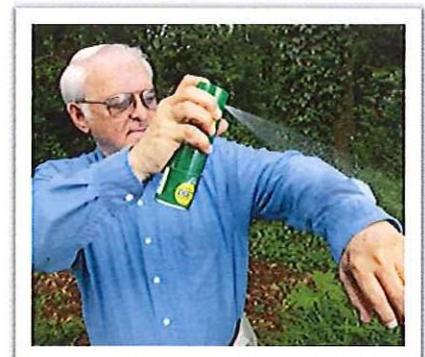


Image: TickRepellant.com

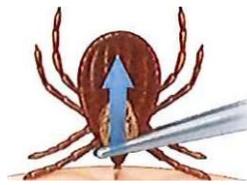


Image: WebMD.com

How to remove a tick

1. Using fine-tipped tweezers, grab the tick as close to its mouth as you can.
2. Slowly pull the tick straight out until it is released from your skin.
3. Do not squeeze, twist, or yank the tick as this can push bacteria into your body
4. Wash the area with soap and water after the tick has been removed.
5. Save the tick so that you can take it to your doctor for it to be identified and tested to confirm whether or not it was an infected tick.

Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prognosis

If you believe you may have been bitten by an infected tick or if you present any of the symptoms of Lyme disease, seek medical help. Your doctor will review your signs and symptoms, ask you if you have been exposed to infected black-legged ticks, perform a physical exam, and request laboratory blood test. It is important to note that some of these blood tests are most reliable a few weeks after an infection. The blood tests may include an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test, a Western blot test, and/or a polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

The sooner you can be treated, the better the prognosis. If you are diagnosed with Lyme disease, you may be given oral antibiotics or intravenous antibiotics. For most, treatment with antibiotics is effective. But some may still experience symptoms even after following their doctors prescribed treatment plan; this is called post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome. In some cases, the lingering symptoms of Lyme disease can last for more than six months. More research is needed to understand why some patients respond positively to antibiotics, while others continue to experience symptoms after treatment. For more information on Lyme disease visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>.

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