



If you find a tick on you, it is important to remove it promptly and properly. The longer the tick is attached to you the greater the risk of infection. Use fine-pointed



tweezers or a special tool for tick removal. Do not use any substance, or heat, to make the tick let go of your skin. Doing this increases your risk of infection.

Call your doctor for advice. Many doctors will prescribe a short course of an antibiotic to lessen your chance of infection. If you develop flu-like symptoms during the spring and summer, or new headaches, rash, fatigue, etc. call your doctor right away. Prompt treatment is vital for full recovery. If you develop any rash, take a picture of it to show your doctor since it may be gone by the time you see him or her.



RESOURCES

If you have questions or need help finding a doctor, there are resources listed below.

contact@ILADS.org; www.ilads.org; www.SEPA.org

www.ilads.org
PO Box 341461
Bethesda, MD 20827-1461
Email: contact@ilads.org

Lyme Disease - What is it?



ILADS
International Lyme and
Associated Diseases Society

LYME DISEASE - WHAT IS IT?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is acquired from the bite of an infected tick. It is most common in the Northeastern states and the Upper Midwest and the Pacific Northwest states, however, cases of Lyme have been reported in all states.

If you are infected, symptoms appear anywhere from 2 to 30 days after you are bitten. Early symptoms are flu-like (fatigue, aches, fever, etc.). Some people develop a distinctive “bull’s eye” rash, but some studies suggest that this occurs in only fewer than half of infected people. In addition, the rash may not look like a typical “bull’s eye” and may be hidden in areas not easily seen, such as behind the ear. The rash may look different from these photos. Usually the rash occurs around the place where you were bitten. It usually expands over time. A “bull’s eye” rash is diagnostic of Lyme disease and treatment can start immediately. It may occur anywhere on the body. It does not have to occur at the site of the bite. Blood testing is not required for diagnosis. If you have this rash, you have Lyme disease.



WHAT CAN IT DO TO YOU?

Lyme infection can lead to severe illness and disability in some people. It can affect any system of the body. No two cases of Lyme disease are the same, so it can be difficult to diagnose.

Left untreated, or under-treated, Lyme can persist for years or for a lifetime. Although rarely fatal, deaths have occurred, especially if the heart is involved.

Lyme can cause debilitating fatigue, arthritis in any joint, neurological problems, psychiatric problems, cognitive problems, ongoing headaches, muscle pain, and vision or hearing problems.

DIAGNOSIS OF LYME DISEASE



Lyme disease is a clinical diagnosis based on your exposure to ticks, the symptoms you report, and the physical examination by your doctor. Commercial lab tests for Lyme disease are not reliable and miss over half of the infected people. A negative test result does not rule out Lyme disease.

TREATMENT

Antibiotics are used to treat Lyme disease. Knowledgeable doctors will prescribe 6 to 12 weeks of a common antibiotic like doxycycline or amoxicillin for a case of Lyme caught early. This is effective for the majority of people. Treatment may be extended if your symptoms remain. If not treated promptly, Lyme disease may become persistent and longer courses of antibiotics may be necessary.



OTHER TICK-BORNE DISEASES

Ticks often carry multiple diseases that are commonly transmitted at the same time the Lyme disease bacteria is transmitted. It is not unusual to get additional infections from the tick bite, including Babesiosis, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis, Bartonellosis, Rickettsiosis and others. Some of these other diseases are caused by protozoans or viruses, not bacteria, and antibiotics will not help. All the infections must be treated for you to get well.

PREVENTION

It is best never to be bitten in the first place. Ticks cannot fly or jump and they are most often found less than 3 feet above the ground in tall grass or underbrush. Avoid walking through these areas, and if you must, check yourself carefully for ticks afterwards. Ticks can be active year-round but you are most likely to be bitten in the warmer months.



The deer tick in the East and black-legged tick in the West most often carry Lyme and may carry other diseases. These are small ticks and easy to miss on your skin. (tick photo plus actual size)

Avoid tall grass and underbrush, which is where most ticks are found. Clothing treated with permethrin is the most effective way to avoid being bitten. You can treat the clothes yourself (which is good for 6-8 weeks and you can wash the clothes during that time), or buy clothing that is permanently treated.



Tick repellents containing DEET can be effective if applied properly and frequently enough while in tick habitat.

Wear light-colored clothing and walk in the middle of trails. It is important to perform careful tick checks. Don't forget hidden areas.

Pets can bring infected ticks into your home. Check them carefully for ticks and use tick repellent products on your pets. Consider spraying permethrin on clothing.