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# Wellness *focus*

## Lyme Disease

### What is Lyme Disease?



Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. It may cause a number of medical conditions. The disorder is often hard to diagnose because its symptoms and signs mimic those of many other diseases. In its early stage, Lyme disease may be a mild illness with flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, and joint pain. Symptoms appear within 7 to 10 days following the infected tick bite. Many people bitten by an infected tick develop a large, expanding skin rash around the area of the bite.

The rash may feel hot to the touch, but is usually not painful. Rashes vary in size, shape, and color, but often have a "bull's eye" appearance (a red ring with a clear center). Nervous system abnormalities may include numbness, pain, weakness, Bell's palsy (paralysis of the facial muscles), visual disturbances, and meningitis symptoms (fever, stiff neck, and severe headache). Other problems, which may not appear until weeks, months, or years after a tick bite, include memory or thinking difficulties or nerve damage in the arms and legs.

**Is there any treatment?** Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics under the supervision of a physician.

**What is the prognosis?** Most individuals with Lyme disease respond well to antibiotics and have a full recovery. In a few patients symptoms of persisting infection may continue or recur, requiring additional antibiotic treatment. Varying degrees of permanent joint or nervous system damage may develop in patients with late chronic Lyme disease. In rare cases, death may occur.

What research is being done? The NINDS supports research on Lyme disease. Current areas of interest in research on the disorder include improving diagnostic tests and treatments, and finding an effective vaccine. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases also support research on Lyme disease.

### How can Lyme disease be prevented? Is there a vaccine?

Because Lyme disease is transmitted by ticks attaching to the body, it is important to use tick-bite avoidance techniques when visiting known tick areas. Spraying insect repellent containing DEET onto exposed skin can help. Wearing long pants tucked into boots and long sleeves can protect the skin. Clothing, children, and pets should be examined for ticks. Ticks can be removed gently with tweezers and saved in a jar for later identification. Bathing the skin and scalp and washing clothing upon returning home might prevent the bite and transmission of the disease.



## What Is A Tick?

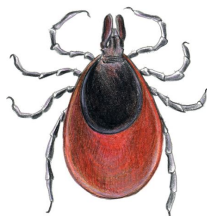
Ticks are blood feeding parasites. They typically can be found in wooded or grassy areas, especially along the edges of trails, roads, and yards. Once on a host (deer, raccoons, and other wildlife), ticks crawl until they find a suitable spot to feed. Then they burrow their mouthparts into the skin for a blood meal.

Ticks can feed anywhere from several minutes to several weeks depending on their life stage, type of host, and type of tick. It is during feeding that infected ticks can transmit disease to their hosts. A tick has to be attached for at least 24 hours to spread disease.

What are the symptoms of tick borne diseases? Early symptoms of many tick borne diseases are similar to the symptoms of the "flu".

### Lyme Disease

- Fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck or neck pain
- Tiredness
- Slowly expanding "bull's eye" rash



Source:  
[http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/ninds\\_neurological\\_sequela\\_of\\_lyme\\_disease\\_information\\_page\\_ninds.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/ninds_neurological_sequela_of_lyme_disease_information_page_ninds.htm)

## Lyme disease awareness and prevention



**How can you help reduce your risk?** Yard care: Ticks are susceptible to dehydration. Cutting grass short, allowing it to dry completely between watering, removing brush and litter, keeping trees pruned and clearing away excess that may attract wildlife (which can carry the ticks). If you're going for a hike, wear light colored clothes (easier to spot the ticks) and long pants. Inspect each other for ticks. Don't forget to inspect your furry friends too, before they bring it into your home.

A recent bite followed by the characteristic bullseye (the skin around the bite develops an expanding ring of unraised redness) can make the diagnosis easy. However, a prior un-noticed bite from an infected tick can make it more difficult, often appearing to be Rheumatoid Arthritis. Blood testing for antibodies to Lyme bacteria is generally not helpful in early stage disease, but it can help in diagnosis in later stages. An overview of the patient's health and ruling out other possible diseases is needed to diagnose Lyme Disease.

**Your health is your responsibility:** Everything about your health relies on you being the number one source if something feels off. Sometimes you must be pushy and persistent to get an accurate diagnosis and treatment. You may not know what it is right away, but with Lyme disease early detection and treatment are critical.

<http://www.examiner.com/x-4763-Seattle-Healthy-Living-Examiner-y2009m6d14-Lyme-disease-awareness-and-prevention>



## Tick Borne Diseases

Tick borne diseases can be serious if not properly diagnosed and treated. If you are ill and have had recent exposure to ticks, it is important to tell your doctor. This information could help accurately diagnose what is wrong with you.

### How are tick borne diseases treated?

Lyme disease, Tularemia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Ehrlichiosis are all treatable with antibiotics. People and domestic animals treated in the early stages with short courses of antibiotics usually recover quickly and fully.

### How can tick borne diseases be prevented?

Ticks can attach to any part of the human body but prefer body creases and areas with hair such as the groin, armpits, sock line and scalp. The best way to prevent tick borne diseases is to reduce your risk of being bitten by a tick.

- Wear clothing that covers the arms, legs, and feet whenever you are outdoors.
- Wear light colored clothing to spot ticks easily.
- Apply insect/tick repellent containing DEET. Follow the product label directions for proper use.
- Walk in the center of trails to avoid contact with overgrown grass and brush at the edge of the trail.
- Check yourself, your children and pets thoroughly for ticks. Carefully inspect areas around the head, neck and ears. Look for what may appear like a new freckle or speck of dirt.

### What do I do if I am bitten by a tick?

- If you find a tick attached to your skin, promptly remove it.
- Grasp the tick using tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
- With a steady motion, pull the tick straight out. Do **not** twist or jerk. If tweezers are not available, grasp the tick with a piece of tissue. Wash your hands and apply antiseptic to the bite.
- Occasionally, mouthparts of the tick stay attached to the skin. The mouthparts will not cause disease. If this happens, consult with your doctor about their removal.
- Monitor the bite and be alert for early symptoms of tick borne disease particularly "flu-like" symptoms or rash over the next month or so. If you develop symptoms, call your doctor.

Source:  
[http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/ninds\\_neurological\\_sequela\\_of\\_lyme\\_disease\\_information\\_page\\_ninds.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/artic/ninds_neurological_sequela_of_lyme_disease_information_page_ninds.htm)