



Lyme Disease Quick Facts

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A routine tick check after working or playing outdoors is your best prevention against getting Lyme disease.

The adult deer tick is not much bigger than one of the typed letters in this sentence, yet it can transmit one of the most unpleasant diseases known to outdoor enthusiasts: Lyme disease. Since many of us spend quite a bit of time working outdoors, it's wise to bone up on this nasty malady. The more you know—about what it is, what to look for, what to avoid, and what to do if you think you have it—the better you can protect yourself and others from getting it.

Here is the latest information compiled from the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

What causes Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which normally lives in mice, squirrels, and other small animals. It is transmitted to humans primarily by the bite of the tiny deer tick. Although deer do not become infected, they are important in transporting ticks and maintaining tick populations.

Is Lyme disease prevalent throughout the United States?

No. Although the disease has been reported in almost every state, it is far more prevalent in the Northeast and in the northern Midwest, specifically Michigan and Illinois.

When am I most likely to be exposed?

More new cases of Lyme disease are reported in June and July than the rest of the year combined.

Can my pets get Lyme disease?

Yes, they can and they should be protected. They can also be carriers of infected ticks. They cannot, however, pass the disease directly on to you.

Helpful Web Sites:

American Lyme Disease Foundation, Inc.:
www.aldf.com

Center for Disease Control:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/

Lyme Disease Association:
www.lymediseaseassociation.org

How I know if I have Lyme disease?

Fever, headache, and skin rash are all typical symptoms of the disease. According to the CDC, almost 70 percent of Lyme disease patients exhibited a characteristic skin rash called *erythema migrans*. It is a circular rash that occurs between three and 30 days after the bite of the tick, at the site of the bite.

If the disease is left untreated, several other symptoms begin to exhibit themselves. These may include loss of muscle tone on one or both sides of the face, severe headaches, shooting pains that interfere with sleep, and joint pain. Often these symptoms will go away without any treatment at all. However, after several months many patients will begin to suffer from arthritis and severe joint pain and swelling. Migraine headaches may also be present, as well as problems with concentration and short-term memory.

Is there help?

Fortunately, yes. In most cases, antibiotics administered for two to three weeks after diagnosis are effective in combating the disease. Early detection and treatment will most often stop the symptoms. The bad news is that a small percentage of patients with symptoms may continue to fight the disease for months or even years after treatment with antibiotics. There is no known medical reason why patients continue to exhibit symptoms.

How can I avoid getting Lyme disease?

The best prevention is to reduce your exposure to ticks and be vigilant about checking yourself after being in and around woods, brushy areas, meadows, and even lawns. Ticks commonly hide in shady, moist leaf litter, on taller vegetation, and on old stone walls, especially near the edge of woodlands where white-footed mice and deer (the tick's primary hosts) are common.

- Wear light-colored clothing to spot ticks easily. Tuck pant legs into your socks when working in high risk areas.
- Always do a full body “tick check” when leaving high-risk areas and at the end of the day.
- Stay on cleared, well-traveled trails.
- If you find a tick, remove it using a pair of tweezers. Grasp the head or mouthparts where they enter the skin, rather than the body, to pull the tick out.
- Seek treatment early if you believe you've been exposed. The majority of early Lyme disease cases are treated and cured successfully.

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