

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LYME DISEASE

In the Clinic
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What is Lyme disease?

- An infection caused by a bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*.
- Human infection occurs through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks (deer ticks).
- A tick must be attached for at least 24 hours before it can transmit the bacteria.
- If untreated, the bacteria can travel through the bloodstream and cause widespread infection.

How can it be prevented?

- Use insect repellent containing diethyltoluamide (DEET), or spray clothing with a tick-killing spray containing permethrin.
- Wear protective clothing and shoes that cover the entire foot.
- Avoid grassy, brushy, and wooded areas, especially in May, June, and July.
- Upon returning from tick-infested areas, conduct a full-body tick check and examine gear and pets for ticks.
- Remove any ticks promptly.
- Bathe within 2 hours of tick exposure.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Expanding circular rash that may look like a bull's eye (erythema migrans).
- Fever, chills, fatigue, headaches.
- Heart palpitations and dizziness.
- Painful joint and aching muscles.
- Loss of muscle tone on one or both sides of the face (Bell palsy)
- How is it diagnosed?
- Visit your doctor if you develop illness within a few weeks of being bitten by a tick.
- Visit your doctor if you develop an expanding rash at the site of a tick bite.



- Be aware that many people with Lyme disease never see a tick on their body.
- Your doctor will conduct a careful physical examination and ask questions about potential tick exposure.
- A blood test can check for antibodies to the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.
- Other tests may be needed if the disease is more widespread.

How is it treated?

- In most cases, Lyme disease can be cured with a few weeks of antibiotics.
- Symptoms may persist or recur if diagnosis and treatment are delayed.
- Once treated, lingering symptoms usually subside with time.

For More Information

www.acponline.org/clinical_information/resources/lyme_disease/patient/

A patient's guide to Lyme disease, including prevention, from the American College of Physicians.

www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/lymedisease/understanding/pages/intro.aspx

Information on Lyme disease, including its history, from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

www.aldf.com/lyme.shtml

Information on tick-borne diseases from the American Lyme Disease Foundation.

www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm049298.htm

Information on Lyme disease, including how to remove a tick, from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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