

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LYME DISEASE

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## What Is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that sometimes live in deer ticks. Humans can be infected with these bacteria if they are bitten by an infected deer tick. The tick must be attached to your skin for at least 36 hours before it can cause an infection. If Lyme disease is not treated, it can cause long-lasting symptoms.

## What Are the Warning Signs of Lyme Disease?

- Expanding circular rash that grows over time and sometimes looks like a bullseye
- Fever and chills
- Feeling tired
- Headaches
- Irregular heartbeat and feeling dizzy
- Painful joints and aching muscles
- Drooping on one or both sides of the face

## How Is Lyme Disease Diagnosed?

- It can be hard to diagnose Lyme disease because people may not feel a tick bite or see a tick on their body.
- Some people may get a rash while others may not.
- Your health care provider will give a physical examination. He or she may ask questions about being in areas where ticks are found and your symptoms.
- Based on your symptoms, you may have a blood test that checks for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. You may have other tests done if the disease is causing more serious symptoms.

## How Is Lyme Disease Treated?

In most cases, Lyme disease can be cured with antibiotics. Treatment may be longer if the symptoms are not caught early. If Lyme disease is not treated, the bacteria can travel through the blood and cause widespread infection. If you are going to a place where there are ticks, like wooded and grassy areas, you can prevent tick bites by:

- Using insect repellent that has an ingredient called DEET or spraying clothing with a tick-killing spray that has the ingredient permethrin.
- Wearing pants, long sleeves, and shoes that cover your whole foot.



- Checking for ticks over your whole body (even hairline) when you return from areas with ticks. Also, always check your gear and pets for ticks.
- Removing any ticks right away. If the tick has attached to your skin, use flat tweezers or fingers to gently tug and pull the tick out.

## Questions for My Doctor

- How long will it take for Lyme disease to go away?
- How long can I expect my symptoms to last?
- What do I do if I still feel sick after being treated for Lyme disease?
- Is Lyme disease contagious?
- Can I get Lyme disease again even if I was treated for it?

## Bottom Line

- Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that sometimes live in deer ticks. You can get Lyme disease if you are bitten by a deer tick that is infected with this bacteria.
- Symptoms of Lyme disease can include a red rash, flu-like symptoms, muscle and joint pain, and sagging in your face.
- Since many people do not realize they have been bitten by a tick, Lyme disease can be hard to diagnose. Your doctor may perform a blood test to check for Lyme disease bacteria.
- In most cases, Lyme disease can be cured with antibiotics. Your treatment may be longer if the symptoms are not caught early. It's important to treat Lyme disease with antibiotics soon after a tick bite.
- Preventing a tick bite is the best defense against Lyme disease.

## For More Information



**National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases**  
[www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/lymeDisease/Pages/history.aspx](http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/lymeDisease/Pages/history.aspx)

**MedlinePlus**  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/lymedisease.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/lymedisease.html)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov/lyme/](http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/)