

Lyme disease: symptoms, prevention, treatment

With summer finally here, it is important know about Lyme disease and how you can prevent it and treat it.

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of a *deer tick* or *blacklegged tick*.

If left untreated, Lyme disease can cause:

- Chronic joint inflammation (Lyme arthritis), particularly of the knee
- Neurological symptoms, such as facial palsy and neuropathy
- Cognitive defects, such as impaired memory
- Heart rhythm irregularities

Symptoms of Lyme disease

The first sign of Lyme disease is often a rash where the tick bite occurred. The rash may start as a small red spot and get larger over a couple of days or weeks. The rash may be circular or oval-shaped and may look like a bull's eye. As the infection spreads, the rash can appear on different areas on the body.

Along with the rash, you may also experience flu-like symptoms:

- headache
- fever
- body aches
- stiff neck
- fatigue

Preventing Lyme disease

Here are some useful tips to prevent Lyme disease:

- **Avoid tick-infested areas.** This includes wooded areas and shady grasslands where ticks are common.
- **Cover up.** Wear long pants, sleeves and socks to keep ticks off your skin.
- **Use a tick repellent on yourself, your children and your pets.** You can find an effective tick repellent containing *permethrin* at most lawn and garden stores.



Deer ticks are generally the size of a sesame seed



Rash: symptom of Lyme disease

TAKE NOTE

Three things to remember about Lyme disease:

1. **Avoid** tick-infested areas. Cover up and use tick repellent when in grassy or heavily wooded areas.
2. **Check** yourself, your children and your pets for ticks.
3. **Contact** your doctor as soon as possible if you have a rash or any other symptoms of Lyme disease.

- **Check for ticks on yourself, your children and your pets.** Be sure to check the hairy areas of the body and wash all clothing once you are back inside.

Removing ticks

If you find a tick, remove it by using fine-tipped tweezers; do not use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish or other products. Make sure all parts of the tick are removed, and clean the area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

Treatment of Lyme disease

If you have been, or think you have been bitten by a tick and have any of the symptoms listed above, see your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can do an exam and order tests to diagnosis if you have Lyme disease. If diagnosed, you may be prescribed antibiotics. A complete recovery from Lyme disease is possible with appropriate treatment.

For more information about Lyme disease, visit any of the following websites:

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)

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