

# LYME DISEASE

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Lyme disease is an infection caused by a spirochete bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The disease is carried by deer, or black legged, ticks. It can be transmitted to animals and humans through tick bites. Deer ticks are tiny. They are about the size of a poppy seed or a sesame seed.

## SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE



Image from Centers for Disease Control

The most recognizable sign of Lyme disease is a rash called *erythema migrans*. It often starts at the site of the tick bite within 3 to 30 days. It may begin as a small red spot and grow larger. The center can fade, creating a "bull's eye" or ring appearance. But some people with Lyme disease have a disseminated (widespread) rash, while others never develop a rash.

Some people with Lyme disease start to feel ill around the time they notice the rash. They may have a "flu like" illness with fever, chills, headache stiff neck, fatigue, muscle aches and joint pain.

If Lyme disease isn't treated, some people can develop complications of late Lyme disease. These include arthritis (pain and swelling of the larger joints), cardiac (heart-related) and neurological (nervous system) problems.

A diagnosis of Lyme disease should be based on clinical findings (symptoms) that are supported by laboratory tests that detect antibodies specific to the bacteria *B. burgdorferi*.

## HOW IS LYME DISEASE TREATED?

Since Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria, it can be treated with antibiotics. It's important for you to complete your treatment and take all the medicine to prevent the spread of Lyme disease to your joints, nervous system or heart. If you have problems with the medicine, don't stop taking it. Call your health care provider and talk to her about your problems.

## YOU CAN PREVENT LYME DISEASE

- Avoid wooded areas with dense shrubs and leaf litter where ticks like to hide.
- Wear light colored clothing that covers most of your skin when you go into the woods. Wear long sleeved shirts and pants instead of shorts. Tuck your pant legs into your socks for added protection.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET. Don't apply it to the face and hands of children. Apply repellents containing permethrin only to clothes, never on skin.
- Conduct a daily "Tick Check": examine your skin and your children's skin (entire body and scalp) carefully every night for ticks and rashes.
- Promptly remove any tick you find attached to the the skin. You aren't likely to get Lyme disease if the tick has been attached to your skin for less than 48 hours. Record date (when) and where (on body) you were bitten.
- Do not ask your health care provider for prophylactic (preventive) antibiotics just because you found a tick. Become familiar with the symptoms of Lyme disease: not all tick bites cause Lyme disease - only people who get sick and/or develop a rash after being bitten by a tick need antibiotics.

