



LYME DISEASE

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States. It is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (deer tick). Delaware remains a high incidence state for Lyme disease cases.

Who gets Lyme disease?

People of all ages, race, and genders can get Lyme disease. However, people most at risk are those who spend time outdoors in areas where more ticks are found, such as woodlands and areas with tall grass. Lyme disease occurs most frequently during the warmer spring and summer months when ticks are active.

How is Lyme disease spread?

The Lyme disease bacterium is spread through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (deer tick). Ticks can attach to any part of the human body such as the groin, legs, armpits, and scalp. In most cases, the infected tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more to transmit Lyme disease.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Early signs and symptoms experienced three to 30 days after exposure can include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle joints/aches, swollen lymph nodes, and a circular skin rash called erythema migrans that resembles a bull's eye. However, not all people infected with Lyme disease develop a rash.

Later signs and symptoms can include severe headaches and neck stiffness, rashes, facial palsy (paralysis of the muscles on one side of the face), arthritis with joint swelling; pain in tendons, muscles, joints, and bones; heart palpitations, nerve pain, numbness or tingling in the hands or feet, and inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms that occur for more than six months after treatment, called Post Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome, include pain, fatigue, and difficulty thinking.

How soon do Lyme disease symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually occur within three to 30 days after being bitten by an infected tick. Later symptoms can appear days to months after a tick bite. Some symptoms may not appear until weeks, months, or years after the tick bite.



Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?

No exclusions are required for a person diagnosed with Lyme disease because there is no person-to-person transmission.

What is the treatment for Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is treated with oral antibiotics. Health care providers may treat complicated cases with intravenous (IV) antibiotics. Early diagnosis and proper antibiotic treatment can prevent Lyme disease.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Lyme disease?

Limiting exposure to ticks reduces the likelihood of infection. Individuals exposed to tick-infected habitats should check their body for ticks daily and immediately whenever coming indoors. Pet owners should check their dogs and cats daily for ticks and put them on a tick preventive medicine recommended by veterinarians. It usually takes at least 24 hours or more of attachment before the tick transmits the bacteria.

Individuals and communities can take these precautions to prevent tick bites:

- Wear light-colored clothing when outdoors.
- Tuck pant legs into socks so ticks cannot crawl up the inside of the pants.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents containing DEET, picardin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone.
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing, and camping gear and it remains protective through several washings. Alternatively, you can buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear.
- Frequently mow lawns, meadow trails, and outside fences to control blacklegged ticks. When outdoors, stay on trails without tall grasses or brush piles. Ticks crawl on the tips of grasses and shrubs and crawl on people and animals when they brush against the vegetation.
- Shower immediately after being outdoors.

Resources

Division of Public Health, Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology, de.gov/lyme

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology
24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156