



LYME DISEASE

What is LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted by ticks to humans and animals. It is the most common tick transmitted disease in the United States. In Delaware, cases of Lyme disease occur throughout the year. Delaware is among the top five states in the United States for the highest number of new cases reported each year.

How is Lyme disease spread?

An infected deer tick or Lone star tick transmits Lyme disease by biting a human or animal host. Ticks search for host animals from the tips of grasses and shrubs and transfer to animals or persons that brush against the vegetation. Ticks only crawl; they do not fly or jump. Lyme disease does not spread person to person.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Early symptoms of Lyme disease include one or more of the following: fatigue, chills and fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes and a circular skin rash called erythema migrans (often resembling a bulls-eye). However, not all people infected with Lyme disease develop a rash. Symptoms usually occur within 3-30 days after the bite of an infected tick. Some symptoms may not appear until weeks, months or years after the tick bite. These later appearing symptoms include: arthritis, numbness, memory loss, paralysis of the facial muscles on one side of the face, and possible heart irregularities. Signs and symptoms of Lyme disease can vary.

How is Lyme disease treated?

Lyme disease is treated with oral antibiotics. Doctors may treat complicated cases with intravenous (IV) antibiotics.

How can I prevent Lyme disease?

Limiting exposure to ticks reduces the likelihood of infection. In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, prompt careful inspection and removal of crawling or attached ticks is an important method of preventing disease. It usually takes at least 24 hours or more of attachment before the tick transmits the bacteria to the person. However, Lyme disease has been known to occur in less time.

Prevention measures should be aimed at personal protection. Wear light-colored clothing and tuck pants legs into socks so ticks cannot crawl up the inside of the pants. Apply repellants to discourage tick attachment. Mow grass frequently in yards and outside fences to reduce tick populations.

How do I remove a tick?

- Grasp the tick with tweezers or forceps as close as possible to the attachment (skin) site. Pull upward and out with firm and steady pressure. If tweezers are not available, use fingers shielded with tissue paper or rubber gloves.
- Do not handle with bare hands. Be careful not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick, since it may contain infectious fluids.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands.
- It is important to completely remove the tick as soon as it is discovered. Consult a physician if removal is difficult.