

## TICKS

If you're planning to enjoy the great outdoors, it's important to consider the threat of ticks. Ticks frequently live in shady, moist ground cover and also cling to tall grass, brush, shrubs, and low tree branches. Lawns and gardens may harbor ticks, especially at the edges of woods and forests and around old stone walls (areas where deer and mice, the primary hosts of the deer tick, thrive).

It's not uncommon to find a tick on a child. While most ticks are harmless and don't require medical treatment, some ticks do carry harmful diseases, including Lyme disease.

Check your child each day for ticks - especially behind the neck and ears, in the groin area, and under the arms. Have your child wear long-sleeve shirts and pants, and remember to tuck pant legs into socks or shoes for extra protection. If your child has long hair, pull it back and tuck it into a cap.

### What to do:

- If the tick is still attached to the child's skin, remove it:
- Using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the tick close to the skin. Firmly and steadily pull the tick straight out of the skin. Do not twist the tick or rock it from side while removing it.
- Rinse the tick out in the sink with hot water
- Wash your hands and the site of the bite with soap and water.
- Monitor the bite site for the next week

### Call the doctor if:

- The tick may have been on the skin for more than 24 hours
- Part of the tick remains in the skin after attempted removal
- The child develops a rash of any kind (especially a red-ringed bull's-eye rash)
- The area looks infected (increasing redness, warmth, swelling or pain)
- If the child develops symptoms like fever, headache, fatigue, chills, stiff neck or back or muscle or joint aches.

### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection which's spread by ticks that carry the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. These ticks acquire the bacteria from mice and then infect humans by biting them and passing the bacteria into a person's bloodstream. These ticks are smaller than dog ticks and harder to detect. Immature ticks, or nymphs, are about the size of a poppy seed; adult ticks are the size of a sesame seed.

### Signs and Symptoms:

Lyme disease is an infection that causes an inflammatory disease affecting the skin, joints, nervous system, and other organ systems.

Symptoms usually appear within a week of infection but may develop up to 30 days after the tick bite. In some cases, there are no symptoms at all.

The symptoms of early Lyme disease, called **early localized stage**, may include a red-ringed bull's-eye rash (known as erythema migrans), which appears either as a solid red expanding rash or blotch, or as a central red spot surrounded by clear skin that is ringed by an expanding red rash. This rash, which develops in most patients with Lyme disease, usually appears 1 to 2 weeks after the disease is transmitted and may persist for 3 to 5 weeks. It may be warm to the touch and is usually not painful or itchy. The bull's-eye rash may be more difficult to see on darker-skinned people. A dark, bruise-like appearance is more common in those cases. Other symptoms of early-localized stage include:

- Swelling of lymph glands near the tick bite
- Fatigue

- Headache
- Achiness
- Joint pain
- Chills

The next stage of Lyme disease, called **early disseminated stage**, usually appears 2 weeks to 3 months after the tick bite, and may include:

- Two or more areas of rash not at the site of the bite
- Severe headache
- Severe fatigue
- Enlarged lymph nodes (glands)
- Stiffness, especially in the joints and neck
- Sensitivity to light
- Facial paralysis (Bell's palsy)
- Tingling or numbness in the extremities
- Irregular heart rhythm
- Fever

The last stage of Lyme disease, **late stage**, may occur if early disease was not detected or appropriately treated. Symptoms of late stage can appear any time from weeks to years after an infectious tick bite and can include Arthritis, especially in the knees

Lyme disease is not transmitted from person to person.

The risk of developing Lyme disease depends on an individual's exposure to ticks. The *Ixodes* tick is present only in the northeastern, upper Midwestern, and Pacific Northwest regions of the United States, and parts of northern and southern Europe.

Domestic animals, such as dogs and cats, may become infected with Lyme disease bacteria and may carry infected ticks into areas where humans live.

**Treatment:**

Treatment of early-localized Lyme disease typically involves a course of oral antibiotics.

**Duration:**

If diagnosed quickly and treated with antibiotics, Lyme disease is almost always curable. People in the early stages of Lyme disease should be cured after the antibiotic treatment.

**Prevention:**

To prevent Lyme disease, avoid contact with soil, leaves, and vegetation as much as possible, especially from May to September, when ticks have not yet matured and are harder to detect. If you must have contact with these areas, follow these tips:

- Wear enclosed shoes and boots, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants. Tuck pants into boots or shoes to prevent ticks from crawling up legs.
- Wear light-colored clothing to help you see ticks easily.
- Keep long hair pulled back or placed in a cap for added protection.
- When outside, don't sit directly on the ground.
- While outdoors, check yourself and your child frequently for ticks.

- After each outing, check yourself, your child, and your pet for ticks. Wash all clothes after leaving tick-infested areas, and bathe and shampoo your child thoroughly to eliminate any unseen ticks.
- If you use insect repellents containing DEET on your child, choose one with no more than a 10% to 30% concentration of DEET. Use repellents sparingly on children between the ages of 2 and 12 and never on babies. Higher concentrations of DEET can be used on clothing, socks, and shoes.