

# FACT SHEET

# Lyme Disease

## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial illness that causes rash, flu-like symptoms, joint pain, malaise and nervous system disorders. If left untreated the symptoms may become chronic.

## What are the symptoms?

- “Bullseye” rash or rashes
- Severe headaches and neck stiffness
- Facial palsy (drooping of the face)
- Arthritis with severe joint pain and swelling, particularly in the knees
- Intermittent pain in tendons, muscles, joints and bones
- Heart palpitations or irregular beat
- Dizziness or shortness of breath
- Nerve pain
- Shooting pain, numbness, or tingling in hands or feet

## How is it spread?

Lyme disease is spread through the bite of an infected tick, typically an immature tick (nymph) that is less than 2 mm in size. The tick attaches to a host animal (wild or domestic) such as a deer, field mouse, or bird that may be infected. Once the tick releases itself carrying the bacteria, it attaches itself to a new host which could be a human. The tick must usually be attached for 36 to 48 hours to transfer the bacteria to its new host. If you have been bitten by a tick and develop symptoms, see your doctor immediately. Antibiotics can be given to kill the bacteria and may help prevent complications.

## How is it prevented?

Avoid areas that are tick infested, moist, brushy, wooded or overgrown with low lying vegetation. Wear light colored clothing that covers arms and legs so that ticks can be more easily seen and removed. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots. Apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing and exposed skin, or permethrin to clothing, following manufacturer’s recommendations. When working or playing in wooded or grassy areas, check your body and clothing frequently for ticks.

When a tick is found, remove it by firmly gripping the body close to the skin with a pair of tweezers and pulling straight out. Cleanse the area with soap and water. After removal, keep the tick in a sealed container with a moist paper towel and contact the health department for assistance regarding tick identification and testing.

## How is it treated?

Antibiotics can cure infection and prevent complications. Treatment is most effective in the early stages.

**Did you know?** You can submit ticks you find on your person (alive, if possible) to the Livingston County Health Department for testing and identification.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)*

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