



LYME DISEASE

WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick (*Ixodes* species). These tiny ticks are very hard to see and are much smaller than the common dog and cattle ticks. Lyme disease is found in Europe, Asia and North America. Lyme disease in persons is not very common in Canada.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE?

Early symptoms may develop within a week to a few months after the infected tick bite. In many cases a rash develops near the site of the bite. Other symptoms, such as fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, muscle and joint pain, and swollen lymph nodes may develop. If left untreated, complications may occur. Later symptoms may develop in persons who did not have early symptoms or did not recognize them and were not treated early on. These include severe fatigue, arthritis, heart abnormalities or nervous system complications.

HOW IS LYME DISEASE SPREAD?

Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. Ticks can become infected if they feed on small animals like mice that are infected. The bacteria can live in the gut of the tick. The disease can be spread when an infected tick bites a person and remains attached for a period of time.

WHO CAN GET LYME DISEASE?

Everyone is susceptible to Lyme disease. Persons who live or work in tick-infested areas are at an increased risk. Depending on the abundance of infected ticks, some areas are a higher risk.

CAN LYME DISEASE BE TREATED?

Antibiotics are used to treat Lyme disease.

HOW CAN LYME DISEASE BE PREVENTED?

Prevent exposure to tick bites (wear light-colored clothing, tuck pant legs into socks, and wear closed toe shoes, use insect repellent containing DEET). Check for ticks attached to clothing or skin. Remove attached ticks immediately by grasping tick with forceps as close to the skin as possible and steadily lift straight off the skin. Thoroughly disinfect the bite site. The tick can be tested.

A vaccine to prevent Lyme disease is available in Canada.

For additional information, contact your regional Public Health office or your family doctor.

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