

## What can I do to prevent Lyme disease?

Prevent Lyme disease by avoiding tick bites, checking often for ticks, and removing ticks before they do any damage.

### 1 Protect yourself from ticks

- Use insect repellent containing DEET. Follow manufacturer's directions, which vary by age. Do not use DEET on children under 6 months.
- Cover as much of your skin as possible when walking, working, or playing in areas where ticks are found. Wear enclosed shoes, tuck your shirt into your pants, and tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to see ticks more easily.
- Walk on well-traveled paths away from high grass and other vegetation.
- Keep the grass around your home short and edges trimmed. Clear brush, leaf litter, and tall grass around edges of gardens and stone walls.

### 2 Check yourself, your children, and your pets after walking in grassy or wooded areas.

- Check clothing.
- Inspect all parts of the skin, including arm pits, groin, and scalp.

### 3 Remove ticks as soon as you find them.

- Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
- Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist, or squeeze it.
- Disinfect the site with soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide to avoid other infections.



### 4 Note the date and location of the bite.

- Record the date and location of the tick bite.
- Contact your doctor promptly if a rash or flu-like symptoms appear.

## What should I do if I find a Blacklegged tick?

Lyme disease is fairly new to Nova Scotia. The first case was reported in 2002. So far, we have had up to two cases a year, all in the Lunenburg area. However, some cases may go unreported. About 30 per cent of Blacklegged ticks in the Lunenburg area carry the disease. This is the first area identified in NS with Lyme disease infected ticks. For regular updates on other areas of NS visit the website listed below in the *for more information* section.

You can help us to learn more by sending us ticks you find on people or pets, unless you know they are dog or wood ticks. This will help us to track the spread of infected Blacklegged ticks throughout the province.

Drop off or mail ticks to your nearest Department of Natural Resources office or to the Museum of Natural History in Halifax. Place the tick in a clean, sturdy pill bottle or film canister. Add a damp tissue to keep the tick fresh. Firmly tape the lid shut. Include your name, telephone number, and details about when and where in the province the tick was found. For example, found after walking through Garden Lots cemetery, Lunenburg County, on June 12, 2006. Mail to: Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3A6

## For more information

For more information on Lyme disease, go to [www.gov.ns.ca/health/ocmoh](http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/ocmoh) or call your local Public Health office. The website will be updated regularly with any new information about Lyme disease and the spread of infected ticks.

Public Health Services



[www.gov.ns.ca/hpp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp)

# Lyme Disease

## Protect yourself from tick bites



enjoy the  
outdoors safely

## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted to humans and pets by a bite from an infected Blacklegged tick. Ticks are arthropods closely related to spiders. Ticks stick to skin and feed on blood. They are active mostly in summer months.

Only certain ticks carry Lyme disease. The tick that carries the bacteria can only transmit Lyme disease after it has filled itself with blood, which takes about 24 hours.

## What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

In most cases, the first symptom of Lyme disease is a rash near the tick bite that may look like a bull's eye target (see photo below). The bite is often painless, so you may not even know that you have been bitten. The rash usually appears between 7 to 10 days after the bite, but the range is between 3 and 30 days.

You may also develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, tiredness, stiff neck, soreness all over, and pain or swelling in the joints. These symptoms may appear in stages and may occur over a period of months.



*Bull's eye rash*

## How is Lyme disease treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat Lyme disease. Early treatment almost always results in full recovery.

If left untreated, more serious symptoms or illnesses may develop, although they are not common. These include nervous system problems such as facial palsy, heart problems, or chronic joint problems such as arthritis. These symptoms, when caused by Lyme disease, can also be cured by antibiotics. Occasionally arthritis may continue if antibiotic treatment is delayed too long. Lyme disease is rarely life threatening.

## How is Lyme disease spread?

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of an infected tick only. The tick must be attached to skin for about 24 hours to transmit the bacteria. You cannot catch Lyme disease from an infected person.

## How is Lyme disease diagnosed?

See your doctor immediately if you have symptoms of Lyme disease. Explain when and where a tick was attached to your skin or how you were exposed to ticks. Your doctor will examine you and may order tests. Tests require a blood sample. The sample is first tested in Halifax. If the test shows positive, it is sent to the National Microbiology Lab for a second test to confirm the result.

## How to identify Blacklegged ticks

Nova Scotia has many types of ticks. For Lyme disease, the tick of concern is the Blacklegged tick, also called the deer tick. Ticks most commonly feed on wild and domestic animals. The photo below shows the difference between the Blacklegged tick that carries Lyme disease and the dog or wood tick that does not.

- Blacklegged ticks are smaller than dog or wood ticks. They have no white markings on the large part of their bodies.
- Ticks are normally carried on wild animals, but they can also be carried on domestic animals such as dogs, cats, and horses.
- Ticks cannot jump or fly. They live mostly on grass and shrubs. Ticks may attach themselves to animals or people that walk through the grass or brush past the shrubs.



*Top row nymph, male and female Blacklegged ticks. Bottom row male and female dog ticks. The Blacklegged tick does not always have black coloured legs. Dog ticks usually have white or silver coloured spots.*

# ...protect yourself from tick bites