

# Frequently Asked Questions about Lyme Disease

## 1. How can I prevent myself from getting Lyme disease?

- Avoid possible tick habitats during the peak time of year (generally mid May through mid July).
  - Deer ticks are found outdoors, in wooded, brushy areas. Unless you spend time in that kind of setting, simply being in a high-risk county won't place you at risk. If walking or hiking in the woods, stay on well-traveled paths or trails. If possible, avoid sitting directly on the ground.
- Consider using a good tick repellent.
  - Products containing permethrin - which are used on clothing - are especially recommended for people who will be spending an extended period of time in possible tick habitat.
    - Permethrin products are marketed under names like Permanone® and Duranon®, and are available in stores that sell camping and hunting supplies, or other outdoor gear.
  - Standard DEET-based products are another option.
    - Use a product containing no more than 30 percent DEET for adults and no more than 10 percent for children.
  - Follow the manufacturer's directions for repellent applications.
- Wear clothes that will help to shield you from ticks.
  - Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and closed toed shoes are best.
  - Tuck your pants into the top of your socks or boots, to create a "tick barrier."
  - It may be easier to spot ticks if you are wearing light colored clothes.
  - If you have long hair, keep it tied back.
- Check frequently for ticks, and try to remove them promptly.
  - Ticks actually have to bite you and remain attached for one to two days before they can transmit Lyme disease.
  - Some research suggests that Human Anaplasmosis (another tick-borne disease) may be transmitted more quickly.
- If you find a tick on yourself, don't panic.
  - Remove the tick promptly by pulling in a slow but firm manner.
  - If possible, use a pair of tweezers or specially designed tick forceps to grasp the tick by the head.
  - Avoid folk remedies like Vaseline®, nail polish remover or burning matches - they are not a safe or effective way to remove ticks.
- Routinely check your pets for ticks.
- When possible, keep children's play-sets or swing-sets in a sunny and dry area of the yard.

## 2. How do I know if I should see my doctor after being bitten by a tick?

- The risk of getting a tick-borne disease is small, even in areas with large tick populations and especially if the tick is removed soon after it becomes attached.
- Monitor the area surrounding your bite for about a month, checking for any symptoms of Lyme disease.
- Early symptoms of Lyme disease typically include a characteristic "bull's-eye" rash that appears as a red ring with central clearing.

- The rash begins as a small, raised red area that may expand to several inches in diameter. It may appear on one or more places on the body, may include one or more rashes, and is usually not painful or itchy.
- It is common to develop an area of inflammation about the size of a quarter right after being bitten by a tick. This is due to your body's reaction to the tick's saliva. However, if you have been bitten by an infected tick, the "bull's-eye" rash will reappear a few days later and typically will be larger than 2 inches across.
- Not everyone develops or notices the rash, however, so it's also important to be alert for other possible symptoms of Lyme disease - fever, headache, chills, fatigue, sore throat, a stiff neck, and pain in the muscles or joints - if you've spent time in "tick country" during the past month.
- There is no need to see a physician unless you are experiencing symptoms of infection.

### **3. Is there a vaccine for Lyme disease?**

- No. There was a vaccine for awhile, but the manufacturer pulled it off the market citing poor sales. We do not expect any other Lyme disease vaccines in the near future.

### **4. If I've had Lyme disease in the past, am I immune from getting it again?**

- No. There is no evidence to suggest that getting Lyme disease once means you are protected from getting it again; there are individuals who have had the disease more than once.

### **5. What is the likelihood of having complications after finishing treatment for Lyme disease?**

- Most people have a complete resolution of their symptoms after treatment. A small percentage of patients (especially those diagnosed in the later stages of the disease) have persistent complaints after treatment. In that instance, your doctor will help you determine if further antibiotic treatment is necessary.

### **6. What can be done to control tick populations?**

- There are measures you can take to reduce the number of ticks around your home. In general, drier conditions mean less deer ticks:
  - Keep lawns mowed, brush trimmed, and leaf litter away from the home.
  - Keep trails or paths in wooded areas on your property clear of vegetation.

