

Who to Contact For More Information

If you have questions or concerns regarding Lyme disease in your area, please contact your local health department.



New York State Health Dept.

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Disease Control
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What Can I Do if I am Bitten by a Tick?

As soon as you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it.

- ✔ Use a tick remover for complete and easy removal of the tick's body and head.
- ✔ If you don't have a tick remover, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick's mouth-parts as close to the skin as possible.
- ✔ Pull out steadily and firmly, making sure that the entire tick is removed. (If you must touch the tick with your hands, use a tissue).
- ✔ Wash hands and apply antiseptic to the bite immediately to prevent secondary infection.

What Should I Do if I Think I Might Have Lyme Disease?

See your doctor immediately and tell him or her of your suspicions, especially if you have found a tick attached to your skin, or if you were in an area where ticks are present. Since Lyme disease can mimic other disorders, this information can help your doctor make a diagnosis. Remember, if Lyme disease is discovered early, it can be treated before it becomes a serious problem.

Is There Treatment for Lyme Disease?

Depending on the type of tick-borne infection a person has, a specific antibiotic will be given. All medical personnel agree that early diagnosis and treatment is critical in preventing a serious later-stage disease and potentially chronic illness.

Can Ticks Carry Other Diseases?

Blacklegged ticks and Lone Star ticks may also carry ehrlichiosis and/or babesiosis, which primarily have been on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley. These other tick-borne diseases produce many of the same symptoms as Lyme disease, but diagnosis is even more difficult. They do not produce a rash and also tend to cause higher fevers than Lyme disease. Although Lyme disease is not fatal, these diseases can

be, especially in the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

Ehrlichiosis is caused by bacteria and can be treated with certain antibiotics, which are also effective against Lyme disease. However, babesiosis is caused by a malaria-like parasite and cannot be treated in the same way.

The more familiar dog tick, which is larger than the deer tick, may carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Fewer than 50 cases are reported annually in New York State. It, too, is highly responsive to antibiotic treatment.

What is Being Done About Lyme Disease?

The State Health Department, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the New York State Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases and many other agencies are currently researching Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

To aid in Lyme disease diagnosis, the FDA approved a first stage rapid blood test, which uses one drop of blood and gives results within 20 minutes. The technology for this test was developed at Brookhaven National Lab and SUNY at Stony Brook with funds provided by the State Senate.

Protect Your Pets

Ticks can infect dogs and cats, too. Also, their fur can act like a "tick magnet," carrying ticks inside your home. Consult with your veterinarian about tick-protection for your pets.

Information provided by:

- New York State Department of Health
- Cornell University
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Mayo Clinic
- Johns Hopkins Medicine

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Know the Facts About

LYME DISEASE

and other Tick-Borne Illnesses



SAFEGUARD YOUR HEALTH

From Senator
Elizabeth O'C. Little
45th Senate District

What About the Lone Star Tick?

In recent years the Lone Star tick, which has been migrating from southern states, has been detected in parts of Long Island and elsewhere. It is an aggressive predator with a white, star-shaped mark on its back. It currently is not known to cause Lyme disease, but rather a similar illness called Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI).

Is There a Tick Season?

Ticks are active when the weather stays above freezing, usually from April through November. Their preferred habitats are wooded areas and adjacent grasslands. Lawns and gardens at the edges of woods may also be home to ticks. Ticks may feed on wild animals such as mice, deer, birds and raccoons, but domestic animals such as cats, dogs and horses can also carry the ticks closer to home.

What Are the Symptoms of Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is often hard to diagnose because it has various symptoms that are seen in many other illnesses. Early symptoms appear anywhere from 3 to 30 days after the bite of an infected tick.

- ✓ In 60-80% of the cases, a red rash develops within a few days to a few weeks.

- ✓ The rash is at least two inches in diameter and may have a clearing in the center or look like a bull's eye.

- ✓ The rash may be accompanied by flu-like signs, such as fever, headache, muscle/joint pain and/or swollen glands.

- ✓ Other tick-borne diseases cause similar symptoms but do not cause the same type of rash.

- ✓ Left untreated, it can spread into the central nervous system, heart and/or joints.

- ✓ Meningitis, stiff neck or facial paralysis can occur within a few weeks to a few months.

- ✓ Some people may develop heart problems such as an irregular heartbeat.

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne illness in the U.S. In recent years, it was reported to be the fifth most common nationally notifiable disease.

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by a bacteria (*Borrelia burgdorferi*) that is spread by the bite of an infected tick. Lyme disease can affect the skin, joints, nervous system and/or heart.

When detected early, it usually can be treated with oral antibiotics. If left untreated, it often causes serious health problems.

How is Lyme Disease Spread?

- ✓ The type of tick responsible for spreading Lyme disease in New York is the blacklegged tick.

- ✓ Not all ticks carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease; they become infected after feeding on an infected animal, such as mice or other small mammals.

- ✓ You cannot get Lyme disease from another person or an infected animal.

- ✓ Transmission from infected ticks does not occur until a tick has been attached and fed for at least 24 hours, which is why it is important to always check for ticks after spending time outdoors.

- ✓ Blacklegged ticks are smaller than the more commonly known dog tick, making them harder to detect. Young ticks, or nymphs, are the size of a poppy seed and adult ticks are the size of a sesame seed. Both can transmit Lyme, as well as other tick-borne diseases.

- ✓ Arthritis can develop in nearly 60% of untreated victims.

- ✓ Lyme arthritis has been misdiagnosed as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis in some children.

How Can I Prevent Ticks from Biting?

Generally, ticks do not jump or fly onto their victims. They wait on vegetation and cling to animals and humans as they brush by. While there is no way to protect yourself 100 percent from being bitten by a tick while in an infested area, there are some steps you can take to reduce your risk:

- ✓ Stay on the center of trails and paths – don't brush against vegetation if you can avoid it.

- ✓ Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and tuck the legs into your socks or boots. This helps keep ticks from reaching your skin.

- ✓ Wear light colored and tightly woven clothing. This makes it easier to see ticks.

- ✓ Use repellents that contain 20% or more DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on the exposed skin for protection that lasts up to several hours. Products that contain permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.

- ✓ Check yourself, your children and pets at least once per day for ticks. A tick is so small it can easily go unnoticed. Pay special attention to the backs of knees, behind the ears, the scalp, armpits and back.



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How Can I Safely Remove a Tick?

If you DO find a tick attached to your skin, do not panic. Not all ticks are infected, and your risk of Lyme disease is greatly reduced if the tick is removed within the first 24 hours.

To best remove a tick:

- Use a tick remover.
- If you don't have a tick remover use tweezers.
- Use the tweezers to grasp the tick near its head and pull away gently to remove the whole tick without crushing it.
- Place the tick in a small container of rubbing alcohol to kill it.
- Clean the bite wound with rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.
- Monitor the site of the bite for the next 30 days for the appearance of a rash. If you develop a rash anywhere or flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately.

Although not routinely recommended, taking antibiotics within three days after a tick bite may be beneficial for some persons. This would apply to blacklegged tick bites that occurred in areas where Lyme disease is common and there is evidence that the tick fed for more than one day. In cases like this, you should discuss the possibilities with your doctor or health care provider.

Tick Identification

The **Blacklegged tick** is very small and orange brown in color with a black spot near the head.

The **Lone Star tick** has a star-shaped white spot on its back.

The **Dog tick** is reddish-brown and larger than blacklegged ticks.

