

Lyme Disease



What Is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that sometimes live in deer ticks. Humans can be infected with these bacteria if they are bitten by an infected deer tick. The tick must be attached to your skin for at least 24 hours before it can cause an infection. If Lyme disease is left untreated, it can cause long-lasting symptoms.



What Are the Warning Signs of Lyme Disease?

- Expanding red circular rash that sometimes looks like a bullseye
- Fever and chills
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Irregular heartbeat and dizziness
- Painful joints and aching muscles
- Drooping on one or both sides of the face



How Is Lyme Disease Diagnosed?

- It can be difficult to diagnose Lyme disease because people may not feel a tick bite or see a tick on their body.
- Some people may get a rash while others may not.
- Your doctor will perform a physical examination and ask questions about being in areas where ticks might be found and your current symptoms.
- Based on your symptoms, you may have a blood test that checks for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.



How Is Lyme Disease Treated?

In most cases, Lyme disease can be cured with antibiotics. Treatment may be longer if the symptoms are not caught early. If Lyme disease is not treated, the bacteria can travel through the bloodstream and cause widespread infection. If you are going to a place where there are ticks, like wooded and grassy areas, practice prevention:

- Use insect repellent containing an ingredient called DEET or spray clothing with a tick-killing spray containing the ingredient permethrin.
- Wear pants, long sleeves, and shoes that cover the entire foot.
- Check for ticks over your whole body when you return from areas with ticks. Also, check and examine gear and pets for ticks.
- Remove any ticks right away.

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Questions for My Doctor

- How long will it take for Lyme disease to go away?
- How long can I expect my symptoms to last?
- What do I do if I still feel sick after being treated for Lyme disease?
- Is Lyme disease contagious?
- Can I get Lyme disease again even if I was treated for it?



Bottom Line

- Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that sometimes live in deer ticks. You can get Lyme disease if you are bitten by a deer tick that is infected with bacteria.
- Symptoms of Lyme disease can include an expanding red rash, flu-like symptoms, muscle and joint pain, and facial sagging.
- Since many people do not realize they have been bitten by a tick, Lyme disease can be hard to diagnose. Your doctor may perform a blood test to check for Lyme disease bacteria.
- In most cases, Lyme disease can be cured with antibiotic treatment. Your treatment may be longer if the symptoms are not caught early. It's important to treat Lyme disease with antibiotics soon after a tick bite.
- Prevention is the best form of defense against Lyme disease.

For More Information

- **National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases:** www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/lymeDisease/Pages/history.aspx
- **American Lyme Disease Foundation:** <http://aldf.com/lyme-disease/>
- **MedlinePlus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/lymedisease.html
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** www.cdc.gov/lyme/

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