

# LYME DISEASE

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

### *What is Lyme Disease?*

*Lyme disease is a bacterial illness caused by the bacteria **Borrelia burgdorferi**. Humans can become infected when bitten by an infected tick.*

### **How is it spread?**

Lyme disease is spread through the bite of an infected tick. The tick attaches to a host animal (wild or domestic) such as a deer, field mouse, or bird that may be infected. Once the tick releases itself carrying the bacteria, it attaches to a new host which could be a human. The tick must be attached more than 24 hours to transfer the bacteria to its new host.

### **How is it treated?**

If you have been bitten by a tick and develop symptoms, see your doctor immediately. Antibiotics can be given to kill the bacteria and may help prevent complications.

### **How can we prevent Lyme disease?**

1. Avoid areas that are tick infested, moist, brushy, wooded or overgrown with low lying vegetation.
2. Wear light colored clothing that covers arms and legs so that ticks can be more easily seen and removed. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots.
3. Apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing and exposed skin or permethrin to clothing, following manufacturer's recommendations.
4. When working or playing in wooded or grassy areas, check your body and clothing frequently for ticks.
5. When a tick is found, remove it by firmly gripping the body close to the skin with a pair of tweezers and pull straight out. Cleanse the area with soap and water.
6. After removal, keep tick in a sealed container with a moist paper towel and contact the health department regarding tick identification.

### **SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE**

Signs and symptoms of Lyme disease usually develop 7-10 days after a tick bite, but can show up as early as 3 days or as late as 32 days.

- "Bulls eye" rash
- fever
- fatigue
- muscle and joint aches
- malaise
- headache

Some people can become infected but have no symptoms.

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