

Updated FAQ for Lyme

Question 1) what is Lyme disease?

Answer: Lyme disease a vector-borne illness caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

Question 2) How is Lyme disease spread?

Answer: Lyme disease is spread through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*).

Question 3) Who gets Lyme disease?

Answer - Anyone can get Lyme disease, but the following are the people who are most susceptible:

- People who are commonly outdoors in areas where ticks are found. (e.g. wooded areas, thick grass, overgrown bushes, and brush or leaf piles)
- Children under the age of 15 years old
- Adults over the age of 50 years old
- People who have other pre-existing illnesses
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Question 4) What are some of the signs of Lyme disease?

Answer - Some of the early signs of Lyme disease include the following:

- A ring-like red rash around the area of the tick bite – the rash will resemble a bulls-eye and will appear within 3-30 days of bite
- Flu-like symptoms (e.g.: fatigue, headache, fever, muscle or joint soreness)
 - Later- stage signs of Lyme disease include the following:
 - Arthritis
 - Neurological problems
 - Cardiovascular problems

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Question 5) How soon do signs of Lyme disease appear?

Answer – Visible symptoms could appear as soon as 3 days after the bite or as late as 30 days after exposure, other symptoms appear within the same time frame.

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Question 6) I was recently bitten by a tick, removed it, and now want to have it identified. Where should I send the tick?

Answer – You can send the tick to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension for identification (<http://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>)

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Question 7) Where do I send my tick to have it tested for Lyme disease?

Answer – The University of Maine Cooperative Extension only identifies ticks; they DO NOT test ticks for Lyme disease. The state lab in Augusta also does NOT test ticks for Lyme disease. Testing a tick that bit you is not going to tell you whether you have Lyme disease. Individuals who still wish to have a tick tested may do so at their own expense at a private laboratory.

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Question 8) How is Lyme disease diagnosed?

Answer - If you think that you might have Lyme disease or were bitten by a tick, watch for symptoms for up to 30 days and contact your provider. The presence of the disease can be confirmed through laboratory testing.

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Question 9) What is the treatment for Lyme disease?

Answer - Lyme disease can be easily treated if it is detected in the early stages. In its early stages Lyme disease is treated with oral antibiotics. If Lyme disease is found in later stages intravenous antibiotics may be given to the patient.

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Question 10) How should I properly remove a tick?

Answer

- Using tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull directly upward with a steady amount of pressure. Do not twist or move the tick because it could cause parts of the tick to stay stuck in the skin; also do not squeeze the tick
- Using a tick spoon: place the wide part of the open notch on the skin near the tick, and apply slight pressure downward on the skin as you slide the spoon toward the tick; continuous motion will remove the tick.
- Do not handle the tick with bare hands and after removal wash both the bite site and hands with soap and water.

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Question 11) Where in Maine is Lyme disease found?

Answer – Lyme disease is present all throughout the state of Maine, be on high alert for ticks if you often find yourself in areas such as:

- Wooded or forested areas
- Around wild, unmaintained landscapes with high grass
- Brush or leaf piles

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Question 12) I'm pregnant and was recently infected with Lyme disease. How might this affect my pregnancy and how might my fetus be affected?

Answer - Pregnant women should stay away from all ticks and areas where ticks are likely found. Lyme disease can be transmitted to an unborn child, although it is extremely rare. It could also cause the mother to miscarry her child or to deliver a stillborn child in rare instances. Contact your provider immediately.

Refer to the federal CDC and their recommendation for more information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/faq/index.html#pregnant>

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Question 13) Is there a vaccine for Lyme disease?

Answer - No, currently there is no vaccine for Lyme disease.

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Question 14) Can I get Lyme disease again after being successfully treated for it in the past?

Answer - Yes, you can get Lyme disease again if you do not take proper steps to protect yourself and are bitten by an infected deer tick.

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Question 15) Can I get Lyme disease from another person?

Answer - No. Lyme disease is not passed from person to person.

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Question 16) What time of the year should I be most concerned about Lyme disease?

Answer – Most cases of Lyme disease are diagnosed during the summer months, but cases can occur year round (ticks may be active any time the temperature is around or above 40°F).

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Question 17) How many people in Maine die each year from Lyme disease?

Answer - There have been no known deaths from Lyme disease in Maine.

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Question 18) How can I protect my family and myself from getting Lyme disease?

Answer - To prevent Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses, the best protection is to avoid contact with ticks. If you are working, playing, or relaxing in areas that may have ticks you should do the following:

- Wear light colored clothing (which helps spot ticks easier) with long sleeve shirts and pants
- Create an extra "no tick" zone by tucking your pants into your socks and your shirt into your pants
- Use an EPA approved repellent on your skin and apply permethrin (kills ticks on contact) to your clothes. EPA Repellent finder (<http://cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/>)
- Check your clothing and skin carefully after being outdoors in tick infested areas and remove ticks promptly.
- Wash area of any possible tick bites thoroughly with soap and water; apply an antiseptic to area of the bite.
- Mark on a calendar the date that you were bitten, and then watch for signs of Lyme disease or any changes in your personal health every day for the next month.
- Keep your lawn cut short, cut overgrown brush, and clear away leaf litter from your home
- Inspect any pets daily and remove any ticks found

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Question 19) Should I take antibiotics to prevent Lyme disease after being bitten by a tick?

Answer – Prophylactic treatment of Lyme may be considered if you meet these requirements:

- If the tick is identified as a deer tick that was attached for more than 24 hours
- If it is less than 72 hours since the original bite
- If more than 20% of the ticks in your area are known to be infected.
- You do not have problems taking doxycycline.

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Question 20) How long does a tick need to be attached to a person for that person to get Lyme disease?

Answer – Ticks need to be attached for at least 24 hours before they can transmit Lyme disease. However, just to be safe you should check your health closely for one month after a tick bite and call your doctor if you have any of the early signs of Lyme disease.

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Question 21) What can I do to protect my pets from getting Lyme disease?

Answer - Domestic animals (such as dogs) that have contact with the outdoors are at a high risk of getting Lyme disease. Because of this, it is important that pet owners regularly bring their pets to a veterinarian. The vet will advise you on tick control products that will help to prevent ticks from attaching to your pet. Vaccinations are available for dogs and other products such as tick and flea collars and pesticides such as Acaricide.