

What is Lyme disease? – Lyme disease is an illness that can make you feel like you have the flu. It can also cause a rash, fever or nerve, joint, or heart problems.

People can get Lyme disease after being bitten by a tiny insect called a tick. When a certain type of tick bites you, it can transmit the germ that cause Lyme disease from its body into yours. But a tick can infect you only if it stays attached for at least a day.

The ticks that carry Lyme disease feed on deer and mice. Ticks are found in tall grass and on shrubs, and can attach to animals and people walking by. Ticks cannot fly or jump.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease? – Symptoms can start days or weeks after a tick bite. They include:

- A rash where you were bitten – the rash often appears within a month of getting bitten. It is red, but its center can be the color of your skin. It might get bigger over a few days. To some, it looks like a “bull’s eye”.
- Fever
- Feeling tired
- Body aches and pains
- Heart problems such as a slowed heart rate
- Headache and stiff neck
- Feelings of pain, weaknesses, or numbness

If a person is not treated, further symptoms can occur months to years after a tick bite. These include:

- Pain and swelling of joints, such as your knees
- Trouble with your memory and thinking
- Skin problems, such as skin swelling or thinning (this occurs mostly in Europe)

Is there a test for Lyme disease? – Yes. Blood tests can show if you are infected with the germ that causes Lyme disease. But these tests won’t work if you have them right after being bitten. It takes time for an infection to show up in your body. If you have the typical rash that goes with Lyme disease, the blood test is not necessary.

If your doctor or nurse suspects you have Lyme disease, he or she will do an exam and ask you questions. The doctor or nurse will use this information (and your blood test result, if necessary) to decide about treatment.

What should I do if I get bitten by a tick or if my child gets bitten? – If you find a tick on your body or on your child, use tweezers to grab it. Then pull it out slowly and gently. After, wash the area with soap and water.

(more information on next page)

You do not need to keep the tick. But knowing what it looked like can help your doctor decide about your treatment. See if you can tell:

- Its color and size.
- If it was attached to your skin or just resting on your skin.
- If it was big, round, and full of blood.

You should watch the area around the bite for a month to see if a rash occurs.

Should I see a doctor or nurse? – See your doctor or nurse if you have a tick and you cannot get it off or if you think you have had a tick attached for at least 36 hours (a day and a half). You should also see a doctor or nurse if you develop symptoms of Lyme disease. Some people don't know that they were bitten by a tick. Or they might not remember having a rash or early symptoms of Lyme disease.

How is Lyme disease treated? – Lyme disease is usually treated with antibiotics. Treatment with antibiotics should help your symptoms go away. Sometimes, symptoms improve quickly. Other times, it can take weeks or months for symptoms to go away.

Your doctor might prescribe medicine for you to take right after a tick bite. Or your doctor might wait to see if you first develop symptoms. Either way, the medicine will treat your Lyme disease.

What can I do to try to avoid getting bitten by a tick? – You can:

- Wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants when you go outside. Keep ticks away from your skin by tucking your pants into your socks.
- Wear light colors so you can spot any ticks that get on your clothes.
- Use bug sprays to keep ticks off your skin or clothes.
- Shower within 2 hours of being outdoors if you think you have been in an area where there are ticks
- Check your clothes and body for ticks after being outdoors. Be sure to check your scalp, waist, armpits, groin, and backs of your knees. Check your child too.
- If you live in a place that has deer or mice nearby, take steps to keep those animals away. Deer and mice carry ticks.

What if I am pregnant? – If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor. Some medicines for Lyme disease are safe to take if you are pregnant, but others are not.

(Citation need) from

http://www.uptodate.com/contents/search?sp=3&source=USER_PREF&search=lyme+disease&searchType=PLAIN_TEXT