

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. It is transmitted by a tick called the black-legged tick (formerly called the deer tick).

Symptoms

The early symptoms usually occur 3-30 days after the tick bite and may include:

- A circular reddish rash near the site of the tick bite. The rash expands over several days to several weeks, becoming several inches across. Some people will have multiple rash locations
- Fever, headache, muscle aches and joint pain, stiff neck
- If untreated, later symptoms can include recurring rash, joint pain, heart disease and nerve disorders.

Transmission

- Lyme disease is acquired by the bite of an infected tick. Most cases are caused by immature ticks, which are very small and may go unnoticed. Ticks must be attached for 36 to 48 hours to transmit the bacteria.
- Ticks that carry Lyme disease are rare in Ohio. They live mostly in northern Midwest and Atlantic states.
- Lyme disease affects both humans and dogs. Dogs or other pets may carry ticks home to their owners. However, no direct transmission occurs from person to person or from dog to person.
- People who spend time outdoors in tick-infested environments are at an increased risk of exposure. This includes woodland/brush habitats, especially during the summer.

Treatment

- A health care provider can diagnose Lyme disease based on symptoms, ticks exposure, and blood tests.
- Treatment with antibiotics during the early stages of Lyme disease reduces the likelihood of later symptoms. Taking antibiotics for every tick bite has not been beneficial, and is not recommended.
- Current information suggests that a person can be infected more than once.

Prevention

- Most people will be exposed to tick-infested environments (woods, brushy areas, fields with high grass) at some point. Therefore, prevention measures should be aimed at personal protection:
 - Wear light-colored clothing — this will allow you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing.
 - Tuck your pant legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pant legs.
 - Apply insect repellent containing permethrin or DEET according to the product's directions.
 - Conduct "tick checks" on yourself and children every hour or two. Use a mirror to search all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find on your body. Check pets as well before allowing them indoors.
- Keep yard and play areas well mowed to discourage ticks.

Additional Information

To remove an attached tick, grasp it with tweezers (NOT bare hands) as close as possible to the skin and pull with firm, steady pressure straight out. Do not twist or jerk the tick, as the mouthparts may break off. If tweezers are not available, protect fingers with rubber gloves or tissue paper. After removing the tick, disinfect the bite area and wash your hands. Contact your local health department for tick identification and testing.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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