



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A disorder caused by a tick bite. Most people who get Lyme disease do not become seriously ill. It is named for Lyme, Connecticut, where it was first described. It has now occurred in 48 of the 50 states.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

#### Stage 1:

- A rash (called erythema migrans) that starts as a small red spot. The spot expands and becomes round or oval in shape with a clear center. It resembles a bulls-eye.
- Mild flu-like symptoms may occur (fever, headache, stiff neck, fatigue, muscle and joint pain).

#### Stage 2:

- Rash develops on other places of the body.
- Single-joint pain or body pain.
- Central nervous system symptoms that may range from headache to loss of consciousness.

#### Stage 3 (may occur months to years after first stage):

- The nerves, joints, heart, and brain may be seriously affected causing a number of new symptoms.

### CAUSES

Infection with a spirochete (a specific type of germ), *Borrelia burgdorferi*, transmitted by an infected deer tick bite. The tick bite may occur 3 to 30 days prior to the rash. The infection cannot be spread from one person to another.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Work, play, or recreational activities in states and locations at high risk for ticks. States include those in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, upper north-central United States, and some California counties. Locations include grassy, brushy, or wooded areas.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Wear protective clothing with tight collars and cuffs.
- Use effective insect repellents, such as DEET, in areas with ticks.
- Have dogs and cats wear tick-repellent collars.
- Careful skin check and removal of any ticks. If the tick is removed from the skin within 36 hours, there is usually no infection.
- A vaccine is not currently available.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The severity differs from one person to another. Mild cases clear up on their own, without treatment. Most other cases can be treated successfully with antibiotics. In a few cases, symptoms may not respond to antibiotics. Additional treatment may help or be ineffective.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Various degrees of persistent joint or nervous system pain, fatigue, memory problems, and other symptoms.
- Rarely, death may occur.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms and activities. Medical tests may include blood studies and others to help confirm the diagnosis.
- Early treatment with antibiotic drugs is important to prevent symptoms from getting worse.
- Use crutches to keep weight off affected joints, if necessary.
- Heat relieves joint pain. Take warm baths or showers, or use heating pads.
- To learn more: Lyme Disease Association, PO Box 1438, Jackson, NJ 08527; (888) 366-6611; website: [www.lymediseaseassociation.org](http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org) or American Lyme Disease Foundation, 293 Route 100, Suite 204, Somers, NY 10589; (914) 277-6970 (not toll free); website: [www.aldf.com](http://www.aldf.com).

### MEDICATIONS

- You may be prescribed:
  - An oral antibiotic (usually for 14 to 21 days) for early stage of the disease.
  - Antibiotics given through a vein (IV) for later stages.
  - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
  - Steroid drugs to reduce the inflammatory response in the heart or central nervous system.

### ACTIVITY

Rest in bed until symptoms get better. Then resume normal activities gradually.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of Lyme disease.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Special notes:

---

---

---

More notes on the back of this page