

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Lyme Disease

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an illness caused by the bite of a tick infected with a bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The disease may affect the skin, nervous system, heart and joints. Lyme disease is found mainly in the eastern and some mid-west states of the United States.

Who gets Lyme disease?

Anyone can get Lyme disease, especially campers, hikers, and others who frequent wooded, brushy, and grassy places where ixodid ticks are found.

How is Lyme disease spread?

People get Lyme disease from a tick bite. The transmission of the infectious organism appears to require that the tick be attached for at least 24 hours. People who do not remove the tick immediately have a higher chance of getting Lyme disease. Some people become ill after crushing a tick with their hands because the tick's body fluids get into cuts or scratches in the skin. There is no evidence of person-to-person transmission. However, rare cases of transmission have been reported from a pregnant mother to her fetus, and infection from blood transfusions.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is difficult to recognize because the symptoms mimic those of other diseases. The illness usually starts with a circular red rash, at or near the site of the tick bite, which often expands to a large size. There may be a clearing in the center of the rash so it begins to look like a target.

Along with the rash, "influenza-like" symptoms may appear such as fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, muscle and joint pain. The joints, nervous system and heart may be affected weeks to months after the

initial tick bite. A small number of people with Lyme disease may develop symptoms during later stages of the disease without having had the earlier skin rash.

The rash or "influenza-like" symptoms usually begin within a month after the tick bite.

What is the treatment for Lyme disease?

Doctors treat patients with Lyme disease with antibiotics. Intravenous medication may be required for some cases.

Can a person get Lyme disease more than once?

Yes. One infection with Lyme disease does not stop a person from getting it again.

How should a tick be removed?

Ticks should be removed promptly and carefully by using tweezers and applying gentle steady traction. Do not crush the tick's body when removing it and apply the tweezers as close to the skin as possible to avoid leaving tick mouthparts in the skin. Do not remove ticks with your bare hands. Protect your hands with gloves, cloth or tissue and be sure to wash your hands after removing a tick.

How can Lyme disease be prevented?

- Avoid tick-infested areas, especially during the months of May, June, and July.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be easily seen. Wear a long-sleeved shirt, hat, long pants, and tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Walk in the center of trails to avoid overhanging grass and brush.
- Check your body daily for ticks when you spend a lot of time outdoors in tick-infested areas. Ticks

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are most often found on the thigh, arms, underarms and legs. Ticks can be very small (no bigger than a pinhead). Look carefully for new “freckles.”

- Use insect repellents containing DEET on your skin or permethrin on clothing. Be sure to follow the directions on the container and wash off repellents when going indoors.
- Remove attached ticks immediately.

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



625 Shadow Lane | P.O. Box 3902
Las Vegas, NV 89127 | 702.759.1000
www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

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