



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Lyme Disease

##### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by a bacterium known as *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

##### What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Three days to one month after infection, 70- 80% of people develop a skin rash. The rash begins as a small red area at the site of the bite that slowly enlarges and leaves a clear center with an outer ring (bull's eye rash). Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, and a stiff neck may also happen. If not treated, Lyme disease may lead to joint, heart and nervous system problems months or years after infection.

##### How is Lyme disease spread?

The bacterium lives in mice, squirrels and other small animals. It is spread among these animals – and to humans – through the bites of some ticks that are infected. In the northeastern and north-central United States, the black-legged tick (or deer tick), *Ixodes scapularis*, transmits Lyme disease. Young ticks can be as small as a pinhead, and the adults are only slightly larger.

##### Who is at risk for Lyme disease?

People who spend time outdoors in tick-infested areas, especially during warmer months, are at an increased risk of becoming infected. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted.

## **How do I know if I have Lyme disease?**

See your doctor. Be sure to inform your doctor if you have been bitten by a tick or have been in areas that have ticks.

## **How is Lyme disease treated?**

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. Signs of Lyme disease may continue even after full treatment.

## **How Lyme disease is prevented?**

Preventing the ticks from biting you will prevent Lyme disease. Ticks are most active in warmer months. To prevent tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass.
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into sock and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on cloths, socks, and shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After outdoor activity, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits.
- Take a hot shower and wash clothes in hot water.
- Check your hiking gear and pets for ticks as well.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>

This page was last reviewed May 2015.