

PROTECT YOURSELF

THINGS WE WISH WE HAD KNOWN ABOUT LYME DISEASE

- P**rotect yourself. Check yourself, family members and pets for ticks daily. Remember that ticks are carried by deer, mice, birds and other small animals found right in your backyard. Nymphal ticks are the size of a poppy seed in early spring and are particularly hard to find. They are active above 35 degrees. You can be reinfected repeatedly each time you are bitten by a tick.
- R**emove the tick properly and take it to a Department of Health laboratory or testing facility to have it tested for the presence of the organism that causes Lyme disease. Since infection can spread rapidly throughout your system, you may want to consult your doctor about prophylactic antibiotic treatment.
- O**bserve. A person infected with Lyme disease can exhibit symptoms within days of exposure, but symptoms may appear weeks, months or even years after the bite.
- T**reatable. Lyme disease in its initial stage is often easily treatable; however, delayed diagnosis or inadequate treatment can lead to serious brain, heart or joint problems.
- E**xamine/evaluate. Early symptoms can include headache, stiff neck, numbness, tingling, fatigue, swollen glands and migratory pains that may come and go. Late stage symptoms are generally multi-systemic and can be very serious.
- C**o-infection. A single tick bite can transmit more than 1 tick-borne illness, such as babesiosis, anaplasmosis or tularemia. Co-infections can complicate Lyme diagnosis and treatment.
- T**esting. Since the diagnostic tests for Lyme are often inaccurate and therefore unreliable, a clinical diagnosis for Lyme disease should be made by a physician based on medical history and symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports this in their literature pertaining to Lyme disease.
- Y**oungsters. Children ages 5-12 are at the highest risk for being bitten by ticks because they often play in tick habitats. Children often find it difficult to explain the subtleties of how they are feeling, and may often appear well and remain physically active.
- O**bvious. A person may have Lyme disease without presenting the most obvious and “classic” symptoms such as bull’s eye rash, flu, joint pain or swelling. Many people never see a tick or develop a rash.
- U**nderstand. There are over 100 strains of Lyme disease in the United States; therefore, length and choice of antibiotic treatment vary greatly. Standard treatment of 2-3 weeks may be insufficient.
- R**ecurring. Many people who suffer from Lyme disease experience symptoms that come and go over time. Continued symptoms or the development of new ones after treatment may be a sign of persistent infection or a new infection. The medical community is divided over the existence of “chronic” or persistent Lyme disease.
- S**ymptoms. The symptoms of Lyme disease, (also known as the Great Imitator) may mimic those of multiple sclerosis, lupus, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, mononucleosis, Alzheimers, Guillian-Barre Syndrome, ALS, rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson’s disease, ADD, or ADHD, GERD, or many other diseases.
- E**ducate. The more you know and understand about Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness, the greater your chances are of avoiding infection and detecting illness if it occurs.
- L**yme disease can affect behavioral and cognitive functioning. Memory loss, attention deficit and processing problems, mental confusion, slurred speech, disorientation, irritability, depression, anxiety and learning problems have all been reported as a result of Lyme disease.
- F**act. A person living in a Lyme endemic area should consider Lyme testing if suffering from a chronic condition that does not improve with treatment. Examples include recurrent gastrointestinal problems, a chronically sore throat, or chronic ear infections.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS and PROTECT YOURSELF

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