

Lyme Disease: Something To Get Ticked About



Part 1 of 2

If you thought Lyme disease was transmitted by ticks, you'd be partially right. If you thought Lyme disease could not be transmitted between humans, you'd be partially right. And, if you thought antibiotics could cure Lyme disease, again you'd be partially right.

Because Lyme disease is a recently discovered ailment, knowledge about the illness has only been partially developed. In fact, it is often overlooked by medical professionals because there are over 100 different symptoms depending on the stage of the disease.

America's #1 Bug Enemy

On the world stage mosquitoes cause more disease in people than any other creature of the insect persuasion. However, in the United States the tick effects the most damage to human health. This is for the most part due to the discovery of Lyme disease in Old Lyme, Connecticut during a juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis outbreak. The Center for Disease Control thought the epidemic unnatural so they investigated the circumstances and discovered Lyme disease as the cause.

Even though Lyme disease was discovered in 1975 it only became a reportable disease in 1991. Since that date the number of cases reported yearly has doubled. Over 20,000 new cases are now being reported annually. There is much speculation this number does not accurately reflect the actual number of people each year acquiring the disease.

What Causes Lyme Disease?

For the most part ticks, specifically deer ticks, but how do they get the bacteria? It all happens when a tick larvae latches onto its favorite meal, the white-foot mouse. The mouse infects the tick with a spirochete called *Borrelia Burgdorferi*, which is a corkscrew shaped organism. This feed finishes out the second stage of the tick's life.



From larvae they molt into the 8-legged creatures we recognize as ticks. Still, they are hardly perceivable because they are so tiny, not much bigger than the head of a pin. During this third stage they are called Nymphs and about 90% of Lyme disease is passed to people by way of a nymph.

The next stage, the adult, can also pass the disease, but because they are bigger and easier to see they are often pulled off before having a chance to transmit the disease. Any tick whether a nymph or an adult needs to be feeding for about 24 hours before the bacteria is actually transmitted into the host. Once the adult tick has taken in its third and final blood feeding it lays over 2000 eggs and dies. Adult ticks prefer to feed on deer for their final feed, hence the reason behind the tick's name.

Originally it was believed Lyme disease was passed by only ticks, but within the last few years it has been discovered that both fleas and mosquitoes can also spread the disease.

[Why Is Lyme Disease So Hard To Diagnose?](#)

The main reason Lyme disease is difficult to pin down is because the symptoms mimic so many other diseases. There are three stages of development for Lyme disease. In the first people often get a skin rash that resembles a bull's-eye, with the center and the outer ring being red while the inner circle remains flesh colored.



Flu-like symptoms are often part of the first stage. Things like fatigue, fever, chills, headache, swollen glands and painful stiff joints can occur within the first few weeks.

With each stage of the disease the symptoms become progressively worse. Stage two left untreated will result in the bacteria working its way through the blood and lymph system. Severe joint pain can simulate Rheumatoid Arthritis and if left unchecked can actually result in joint damage. The nervous system can become affected to such a degree that loss of movement, like facial (Bell's Palsy) or spinal paralysis, will result.

The third stage of Lyme disease is the most damaging and though rare can even result in death. Often the arthritic and neurological problems remain but other symptoms can develop like loss-of-memory, an inability to concentrate, heart issues, and eye problems. It is vital to attack the problem as soon as it is discovered. The sooner antibiotics are started the more likely a cure can result. Antibiotics may not reverse a problem once fully developed like Rheumatoid Arthritis, heart or brain degeneration.

[Human to Human](#)

The one good thing about Lyme disease is that even though it often acts like the flu it can not be passed from person to person, at least not in the way the flu is passed. However, Lyme disease can be spread through a blood transfusion and from mother to fetus.

[Calculating The Danger](#)

Even though up to 40% of deer ticks have the bacteria which causes Lyme disease only 2 to 3% of people bitten by deer ticks will ever develop the disease.



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