

## Lyme Disease

### What causes Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by bacteria. Humans may get Lyme disease from the bite of a deer tick that has the bacteria. White-tailed deer most often carry these ticks. Other animals may carry this tick as well. The tick is about the size of the point of a pencil. Because the tick is so small, many patients with Lyme disease don't even know they were bit.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of Lyme disease include:

- Feeling tired and weak.
- Having a fever and flu-like symptoms.
- A circle rash, or lesion, normally develops 7 to 14 days after the tick bite.
  - The first rash occurs at the site of the bite. The rash quickly gets larger. It may get to a size of between 9 and 30 inches.
  - The skin may itch or hurt. It may be red or look like a target with a bull's-eye.
  - The most common places for the rash are the underarms, the thigh, the groin, and around the belly button.
  - More lesions may develop several days or weeks after the first one is seen. Your child may also be tired, have a fever, headache and muscle aches.



The early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease often fade in 3 to 4 weeks. The feelings of being tired may last a lot longer.

### How is it treated?

Antibiotic medicines are very effective. Early diagnosis and treatment can shorten the duration of the bull's-eye lesion. Antibiotics prevent many of the complications. After treatment is done, the tired feeling and joint or muscle pain may take weeks or months to go away.

### What are the complications?

If the disease is left untreated for several weeks or more:

- 5% to 8% of patients develop heart problems.
- 10% of patients will have Nerve or brain (neurological) problems.
- 50% of patients get arthritis.

## **Will my child get Lyme disease if bitten by an infected tick?**

An infected deer tick must be attached to the skin for 24 to 48 hours **before** the infection is spread to your child. After being bitten by an infected deer tick, there is only an 8%-10% chance of getting Lyme disease.

It is important to check your child's skin every day. If a tick is found stuck in the skin, it is important to get the tick out right away. This helps to prevent the disease from spreading to your child. Get the tick out by grasping it with a tweezers or forceps. Pull it out of the skin with a steady motion.

## **How can Lyme disease be prevented?**

Avoid areas where there may be ticks. These include tall grass, bushes and woods. Avoid these areas from April to October. If your child will be in these areas, dress them in light-colored clothing. Your child should wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants. Insect repellents give some protection. Insect repellents may be absorbed through the skin. They should be used with caution in small children. Talk your child's doctor about the use of repellents.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**