

Symptoms of Lyme Disease

Keep a watchful eye on the bite area for a few days afterwards. Rashes occurring within a few hours of a bite are not caused by Lyme Disease and are likely to be simple allergic reactions or infections. However, symptoms of Lyme Disease usually show a few days to several weeks after being bitten. Early signs might show as an expanding reddish rash, sometimes very faint, around the bite area.

Of greater concern is if symptoms also resemble influenza, with swollen glands near the site, mild headaches, tiredness and aching muscles and joints. If in any doubt or concern, consult your local health care provider. Lyme Disease can affect the skin and, in more serious cases, may also cause partial paralysis of the face, painful joints, and tingling or loss of sensation in the limbs.

If left untreated, it will simply go on spreading across a much larger area but, if acted upon promptly, it will respond rapidly to effective antibiotic treatment. The more serious cases of infection may require longer and more strenuous antibiotic treatment which, once again, highlights the importance of prompt action.



Swollen appearance of infected bite.

An Awareness and advisory leaflet produced by

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Life Cycle of the Deer Tick



The relative size of the animals approximates their significance as hosts for the different tick life cycle stages in a typical woodland habitat.

Courtesy of Dr Jeremy Grey and Bernard Kaye.

Diagram and photographs from:-

European Union Concerted Action on Lyme Borreliosis (EUCALB): www.did.strath.ac.uk/vie/LymeEU/leaflet.htm

Morecambe Bay Primary Health Care Trust also produce an advisory leaflet on Lyme Disease.

More information can be found on the internet, search for 'Lyme Disease'



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Ticks

What are they?



Ticks – What they are... how to avoid them... and what to do if you get bitten.

Ticks – what are they?

The presence of ticks in the countryside is a simple fact of life. The larvae or young are small creatures, not much bigger than a pin head. They can be picked up in grassland and woodland areas, especially where deer or other animals occur. Ticks attach themselves to deer, livestock, domestic animals, and humans and feed by biting through the skin and sucking blood. They are present in most parts of the country and are most abundant in long grass, rough vegetation, bracken and woodland. They may be present throughout the year but are particularly active between May and October and especially at times of warm weather.

Lyme Disease – What is it?

Whilst irritating, most tick bites are, essentially, harmless and can be treated with an insect bite cream or antihistamine ointment to reduce irritation. However, Lyme Disease is an illness which can develop in humans who are bitten by a minority of ticks which carry the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria, or other diseases.

With this in mind, this guidance seeks to raise awareness of the issue, not alarm. It should not detract from your enjoyment of the countryside. Although ticks are abundant, most are not infected by the bacteria and the incidence of bites from infected ticks that develop into Lyme Disease in humans is, thankfully, low.

More information can be found on internet websites if you search for 'Lyme Disease' or 'Tick Alert'.



Larva, nymph, male and female ticks (*enlarged*)



How can I avoid ticks?

You can avoid contact with ticks by keeping to open paths and avoiding walks through long vegetation. Keep your skin covered, wear long trousers, tuck trousers into socks and wear a long-sleeved top. Light-coloured clothing makes it easier to see ticks and brush them off immediately. The application of insect repellent may also help to deter them. Examine yourself and your children at regular intervals and brush your clothing off at the end of the day. Check your (and your children's) skin thoroughly after being in a tick-infested area, paying particular attention to high-risk areas such as the armpits, groin, ankles and scalp.

For those working in tick-infested environments, work clothing should not be brought into the home at the end of the day.

Dogs are also susceptible to attack from ticks, and veterinary tick and flea repellent sprays or collars are advisable for those animals for which ticks develop a particular liking! Particular care should be taken to check that, after a run in the country, pets do not bring ticks into the home on their fur.

What do I do if I am bitten?

An infected tick is unlikely to transmit the infection for some hours after biting. So, prompt removal of ticks is the most effective preventative measure. They bury their head into the flesh so that only the abdomen is protruding as shown in the photo to the left.

Remove the tick as soon as possible using your fingernails or a pair of tweezers. Pull upwards slowly and consistently without squeezing the tick, until it lets go. Take your time; there is no need to rush or panic. Try not to squeeze or crush the tick since this may leave mouth parts and debris remaining in the skin which could cause infection later. There are also several devices on the market which aid the removal of ticks from the skin. Do not attempt to remove the ticks by burning (i.e. do not apply hot matches, cigarette ends, etc.) and do not use such chemicals as nail polish remover, alcohol or petroleum jelly, etc. Once the tick has been removed, clean the bite area with antiseptic disinfectant immediately.