



Lyme Disease

How to Prevent Lyme Disease

What is the Problem?

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vectorborne illness in the United States.¹ It is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks.² Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a skin rash called erythema migrans.³ If left untreated Lyme disease can spread to the joints, the heart, and the nervous system.⁴

Who is at Risk?

Lyme disease does not occur nationwide and is most prevalent in the Northeast and upper Midwest.⁵ In fact, 95% of cases occur in only 13 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.⁶



Prevention Tips

People who live in tick-invested areas should follow the tips below to reduce their risk of developing Lyme disease:

- Be extra vigilant in warmer months (April-September) when ticks are most active.⁷
- Avoid wooded areas and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.²
- Walk in the center of trails.⁸
- Use insect repellents that contain 20-30% DEET on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours.⁹
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing and gear (or buy pre-treated clothing). It will last for several washings.¹⁰
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors to wash off and more easily find ticks that are left behind.¹¹
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas. Examine pets and gear as well.¹²
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill remaining ticks.¹³



Plan of the Week (POW):

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vectorborne illness in the United States and occurs most frequently in the Northeast and upper Midwest.¹⁴ **ALWAYS** check your skin, clothing, gear, and pets for ticks when returning from tick-infested areas.¹⁵ **NEVER** ignore the symptoms (the most notorious is the bulls-eye rash), as the disease can spread to the joints, heart, and nervous system.¹⁶ Be extra vigilant during the warmer months to help keep your family safe.¹⁷

References

- 1,5,6,14 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lyme Disease Data. <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/stats/index.html>. Updated 16 September 2013. Accessed 23 September 2013.
- 2-4,16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lyme Disease. <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>. Updated 14 June 2013. Accessed 23 September 2013.
- 7-13,15,17 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing Tick Bites. http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/on_people.html. Updated 15 November 2011. Accessed 23 September 2013.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphec/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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