

Background

Lyme disease is an infection caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* which is spread by ticks. Lyme disease is very prevalent in the northeast. Pennsylvania regularly reports more Lyme disease cases than any other state.

How Lyme disease spreads

Lyme disease spreads when a tick bites you and is attached for 36 to 48 hours. Lyme disease cannot be spread person – to – person but can be transferred to a child in utero.

Ticks can attach to any part of the body, but prefer hard to see areas such as the groin, armpits, and scalp.

Symptoms

Although Lyme disease is rarely life-threatening, early diagnosis and proper antibiotic treatment is crucial to prevent severe disease. Lyme disease symptoms include:

- Bullseye rash, called erythema migrans
- Fatigue
- Chills and fever
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Swollen lymph nodes



The bullseye (erythema migrans) rash can vary widely on different skin tones

Prevention

To prevent Lyme disease:

- Use insect repellent containing low concentrations of diethyltoluamide (DEET) on clothing and exposed skin
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be seen more easily
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and a hat
- Tuck pants into tall socks and shirt in to pants
- Walk in the center of trails to avoid tall brush
- Check for ticks daily, especially after outdoor walks

How to remove a tick

If you find a tick attached to your skin, you want to remove it as soon as possible.

1. Grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible using clean, fine tipped tweezers
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. DO NOT twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers
3. After removing the tick, clean the area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water
4. Dispose of the tick by:
 - a. Flushing it down the toilet
 - b. Placing it in a sealed bag/container, or
 - c. Wrap it tightly in tape

Follow-up with your doctor if you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing the tick