



*"It's no longer a question of staying healthy. It's a question of finding a sickness you like." - Jackie Mason*

## May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month

### Lyme disease

Lyme disease is an infection which is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system.

You are more likely to get Lyme disease if you live or spend time in grassy and heavily wooded areas where ticks carrying the disease thrive. It is important to take adequate precautions in areas where Lyme disease is prevalent.

#### Causes:

Risk factors for Lyme disease include:

- ✚ Doing outside activities that increase tick exposure (for example, gardening, hunting, or hiking) in an area where Lyme disease is known to occur.
- ✚ Having a pet that may carry ticks home.
- ✚ Walking through high grasses.

#### Symptoms:

- ✚ Red, expanding rash called erythema migrans (EM) or "bull's eye" rash.
- ✚ Fatigue.
- ✚ Chills.
- ✚ Fever.
- ✚ General ill feeling.
- ✚ Headache.
- ✚ Joint pain.
- ✚ Muscle pain.
- ✚ Swollen lymph nodes.
- ✚ Stiff neck.
- ✚ Numbness or pain in the nerve area.
- ✚ Paralysis or weakness in the muscles of the face.
- ✚ Heart problems, such as skipped heartbeats (palpitations), chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- ✚ Abnormal muscle movement.
- ✚ Joint swelling.
- ✚ Muscle weakness.
- ✚ Speech problems.
- ✚ Thinking (cognitive) problems.

## Less common signs and symptoms:

### Several weeks after infection, some people develop:

- 🦋 Eye inflammation.
- 🦋 Liver inflammation (hepatitis).
- 🦋 Severe fatigue.

### When to Contact a Medical Professional:

#### Call your health care provider if you have:

- 🦋 A large, red, expanding rash that may look like a bull's eye.
- 🦋 Had a tick bite and develop weakness, numbness, tingling, or heart problems.
- 🦋 Symptoms of Lyme disease, especially if you may have been exposed to ticks.

### Prevention:

#### You can decrease your risk of getting Lyme disease with simple precautions:

- 🦋 Use insect repellents.
- 🦋 Do your best to tick-proof your home.
- 🦋 Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks.
- 🦋 Don't assume you are immune.

#### If you do walk or hike in these areas, take measures to prevent tick bites:

- 🦋 Wear light-colored clothing so that if ticks land on you, they can be spotted and removed.
- 🦋 Wear long sleeves and long pants with pant legs tucked into your socks.
- 🦋 Spray exposed skin and your clothing with insect repellent, such as DEET or permethrin.
- 🦋 After returning home, remove your clothes and thoroughly inspect all skin surface areas, including your scalp. Shower as soon as possible to wash off any unseen ticks.

#### If a tick is attached to you, follow these steps to remove it:

- 🦋 Grasp the tick close to its head or mouth with tweezers. Do not use your bare fingers. If needed, use a tissue or paper towel.
- 🦋 Pull it straight out with a slow and steady motion. Avoid squeezing or crushing the tick. Be careful not to leave the head embedded in the skin.
- 🦋 Clean the area thoroughly with soap and water. Also wash your hands thoroughly.
- 🦋 Save the tick in a jar.
- 🦋 Watch carefully for the next week or two for signs of Lyme disease.
- 🦋 If all parts of the tick cannot be removed, get medical help. Bring the tick in the jar to your doctor.

### Reference Links:

- 🦋 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002296/>
- 🦋 <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/lyme-disease/basics/prevention/con-20019701>
- 🦋 <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

**For any enquiry or assistance please contact:** [wellness@medicaretpa.co.in](mailto:wellness@medicaretpa.co.in)

**Disclaimer:** No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.