



Lyme Disease

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What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection, spread by tick bites, caused by a bacteria carried by rodents and occasionally birds.

If a tick bites an animal carrying the bacteria, it becomes infected and can then pass on the infection when it bites other animals or humans. A tick must remain attached for more than a day before the infection can be passed on. Ticks that spread Lyme disease are tiny and their bites do not hurt, so you may not immediately realise a tick has attached itself to you.

Where is it found?

Infected animals and ticks that carry Lyme disease are found in grasslands, woods and forests of mild regions of Asia, Europe and North America. Lyme disease was first discovered in the United States in the 1970s.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever.
- Headache.
- Joint and muscle pain, with swelling.
- Temporary paralysis of your face ([Bell's palsy](#)).
- A distinctive red "bull's eye" rash called erythema migrans.



Image of "bullseye" rash courtesy of CDC.

Arthritis, heart problems and meningitis can also develop if you do not get treated.

What is my risk?

You are at risk if you get bitten by ticks in forests, woods and parks in places where Lyme disease is found. This is more likely if you work outside or you do a lot of walking, camping or outdoor activities, especially in spring, summer and early autumn. You cannot get Lyme disease directly from another person.

How can I prevent it?

- Follow strict [insect bite avoidance guidelines](#).
- Wear shoes rather than sandals and tuck your trousers into your socks.
- Avoid walking in overgrown grass or bushes – stick to the middle of paths.
- Check your whole body, including your scalp, regularly for ticks.
- Shower as soon as you can after being outside.
- If possible, tumble dry clothes.
- Make sure you know how to [remove ticks](#) correctly.
- See a doctor if you have a fever and/or rash.
- If you find a tick attached to you and it has been on for less than three days, you could benefit from taking an antibiotic to prevent Lyme disease.- ask your doctor about this.



Can it be treated?

Yes, Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics.

Is there a vaccine?

No not currently in the past there was an American vaccine, but it was withdrawn in 2002.

Links:

[Health Protection Agency: Lyme borreliosis/Lyme disease](#)

[NHS Choices: Lyme disease](#)