



## LYME DISEASE

In the year 2000, New Jersey ranked third in the nation for the number of Lyme Disease cases. Only New York and Connecticut have more reported cases than New Jersey. This increase is due to many factors, including physicians ordering the Lyme disease blood test more often, better reporting and the number of homes being built in more wooded areas around the state. Still, there is no reason to panic. You should be aware of how to identify the deer tick. You should also be aware of the symptoms and how to protect yourself and examine yourself, your family and your pets for the presence of ticks.

Lyme disease was first identified in 1975 when researchers from Yale were looking for the cause of a high number of young people developing what was thought to be Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. It was discovered in Lyme, Connecticut and hence the name.

The disease can occur year round, but most cases are reported in the spring and summer due to more involvement with outside activities and the exposure to the ticks that carry the disease. The disease is transmitted by the bite of a tick that is infected by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* spirochete. It is usually the bite of a deer tick that is responsible for transmitting the disease. It should be noted that not all deer ticks carry Lyme disease

### **What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms of Lyme disease come in stages after the infected bite.

#### FIRST STAGE (A few days to 30 days)

**Bull's eye rash**-A round redskin lesion at the site of the bite. Many of those bitten do not develop this rash:

- Fever
- Malaise
- Headaches
- Fatigue

#### SECOND STAGE (4-6 weeks after infection)

- Neurological problems
- Bell's Palsy
- Cardiac Problems

### THIRD STAGE (Months or years after initial infection)

- Severe arthritis
- Severe fatigue
- Short-term memory loss
- Shooting pains and numbness

#### **FREQUENTLY ASK QUESTIONS**

##### Can I be bitten by a tick and not know it?

YES. The deer tick is very tiny. Many individuals are bitten and do not even know that a tick infected them. The tick can be mistaken for a small freckle, if seen at all. If you are infected, your symptoms will start manifesting themselves within a few weeks.

##### Can Lyme Disease be treated?

YES. Antibiotics are usually quite effective especially when taken early. Drugs that may be effective are tetracycline, doxycycline, penicillin and amoxicillin for 14 to 21 days. For severe infections, penicillin and antibiotic treatment administered I.V. for 14 days or more may be needed.

##### How will my doctor know I have Lyme disease if I don't remember being bitten by a tick?

Your doctor will assess your symptoms and your activities. If this indicates the possibility that you may have been exposed, he or she may order a blood test. The test will confirm Lyme disease and the doctor will start treatment.

##### Do deer ticks usually drop out of trees and are they normally found in the head/neck area?

NO. The deer ticks normally are in high grass or brush and travel up the body.

##### How can I prevent Lyme Disease?

There are several ways you can prevent being bitten by a deer tick:

- Wear light colored clothes and high socks or pants tucked into boot or socks when working or walking in wooded or grassy areas.
- If walking in the park, stay on clear paths rather than in the grassy or wooded area.
- Check your clothing and yourself after being in a wooded area
- Use tick repellent according to directions.
- Remove ticks immediately and correctly.

### How do you remove a tick correctly?

Recommended procedure for tick removal:

- ✓ **BLUNT CURVED FORCEPS or TWEEZERS** should be used. If fingers are used, shield them with a tissue, paper towel or rubber gloves.
- ✓ **GRASP** the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upward with even pressure. **DO NOT TWIST or JERK** the tick as this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin along with the cement collar.
- ✓ Take care not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick as its fluids (saliva, blood, and gut contents) may contain infectious agents.
- ✓ **DO NOT HANDLE THE TICK WITH BARE HANDS.** As infectious agents may enter by mucous membranes or breaks in the skin. This precaution is particularly directed to individuals who “detick” domestic animals using unprotected fingers. Children should not be permitted to do this procedure.
- ✓ After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the site bitten and wash hands with soap and water.
- ✓ **DO NOT** use petroleum jelly, isopropyl alcohol, gasoline, kerosene, fingernail polish or a hot match to make the tick “back out”. These methods **DO NOT** work and allow the tick to remain imbedded until it is forcibly removed by the above method.
- ✓ Ticks can be safely disposed of by placing them in a container of alcohol if you want to save the tick for future reference or by flushing them down the toilet.

### Is the Township of Hamilton doing anything to prevent Lyme disease?

**YES.** The Township of Hamilton has taken many steps to reduce the occurrence of Lyme disease by:

- Keeping the paths in all parks free of brush and high grass where ticks usually are found.
- Answering all citizen complaints concerning high grass and weeds and keeping those conditions abated (corrected in a certain time period).
- As with many diseases, the key to prevention is education. We are distributing pamphlets and informational materials on Lyme disease and ticks. We are also available to give programs to groups concerning Lyme disease through our Health Educator.
- Directing our citizens to sites that may identify ticks so that you know if the tick that bit you was a deer tick.

If you have any question or concerns, you may call the following numbers for more information on Lyme disease:

Citizen Complaints: (609) 890-3828

Information and Programs: (609) 890-3647

Medical Information: (609) 890-3884

Animal Control: (609) 890-3550

All other questions may be directed to our general health information number at (609) 890-3820.

### TICK LIFE CYCLE

