

# LYME DISEASE



Lyme disease is an illness caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* and *Borrelia mayonii*. It is spread to humans by the Ixodes scapularis tick (also known as the black-legged tick or deer tick). Anyone can get Lyme disease, but people who spend more time outdoors are at a higher risk of being bitten by an infected tick. In Wisconsin, the highest number of cases are seen in the western and northern regions, but recently cases have increased in the central and eastern regions. The average number of reported cases has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

## What causes it?

- ▶ Lyme disease is spread to humans through the bite of an infected black-legged tick. Ticks can be found in areas with woods, brush, or tall grass. A tick must be attached for at least 24 hours to spread Lyme disease to a person.
- ▶ Lyme disease is spread during the spring, summer, and fall by both adult ticks and the young nymph stage of the tick. The risk for Lyme disease is highest in the spring and early summer, when the nymphs are most active. People may not remember being bitten by a tick because the black-legged nymphs are very small, about the size of a poppy seed.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

The early symptoms can show up 3-30 days after being bitten by the tick. If not treated, the later symptoms can take weeks to months to show up.

### Early Symptoms

- ▶ Circular reddish rash (does not appear in all cases)
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Stiff neck
- ▶ Muscle/joint pain

### Late Symptoms

- ▶ Meningitis (brain swelling)
- ▶ Facial muscle weakness
- ▶ Heart abnormalities
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ Joint pain/swelling

## What are the treatment options?

Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. It is important to get treatment as soon as possible after symptoms start. If treatment is delayed, it can spread to the joints, heart, and nervous system and have long-term effects.

## How can it be prevented?

Follow these steps to reduce your risk of being bitten by a tick:

- ▶ When outdoors, wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and high socks with pant cuffs tucked into the socks. Wear light-colored clothing so ticks are easier to see.
- ▶ Walk in the center of trails and try not to brush up against shrubs and tall grass.
- ▶ Wear insect repellent with 20-30% DEET, or use 0.5% permethrin on clothes. Follow directions on manufacturer's label.
- ▶ Do tick checks on yourself and others after coming in from outside and quickly remove any ticks.
- ▶ Take a shower after coming in from outside to remove insect repellent and any ticks on the body.
- ▶ Put clothing worn outside in dryer on high for at least 10 minutes to kill any ticks that may still be on clothes.

### HOW TO REMOVE A TICK:



Use tweezers to remove the tick. Only the tick by its mouthparts, as close to the skin as possible. Pull straight up. Wash the area with soap and water.

