



Ten Facts You Should Know About Lyme Disease



1. Lyme disease is caused by bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi* that is only transmitted to humans when they are bitten by an infected tick.
2. To infect its host, a tick typically must be attached to the skin for at least 36 hours.
3. Most cases of Lyme disease occur in late spring and early summer.
4. The most common symptoms of Lyme disease include a red, circular “bull’s-eye” rash often accompanied by muscle and joint aches. About 70 to 80 percent of people infected develop the rash, which shows up several days to weeks after the tick bite.
5. Lyme disease is diagnosed by medical history, physical exam, and sometimes a blood test. It may take four to six weeks for the human immune system to make antibodies against *Borrelia burgdorferi* and therefore show up in a positive blood test. That is why patients with the Lyme rash usually have a negative blood test and diagnosis is based on the characteristic appearance of the rash. Patients with other clinical manifestations such as Lyme arthritis will usually have a blood test. Anyone who has symptoms for longer than six weeks and who has never been treated with antibiotics is unlikely to have Lyme disease if the blood test is negative.
6. Most cases of Lyme disease are successfully treated with a few weeks of antibiotics. Using antibiotics for a very long time (months or years) does not offer superior results and in fact can be dangerous, because it can cause potentially fatal complications.
7. Tickborne diseases have been reported in all 48 contiguous states and Alaska, though the majority or focused in the Northeast and Midwest.
8. Researchers didn’t identify the cause of Lyme disease and connect it with ticks until 1981. The bacterium that causes the disease is named in honor of Willy Burgdorfer, the scientist who made the connection.
9. In 2016 there were over 58,000 cases of Lyme disease reported in the US. Cases of vector borne diseases from ticks and mosquitos have tripled since 2004.
10. The best treatment for Lyme disease is prevention: Be cautious when walking in the woods, avoiding bushy and grassy areas. Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts and wear insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin. After walking in wooded areas, thoroughly check the skin for the poppy-seed sized ticks, paying particular attention to the scalp, armpits and groin. If you find a tick, carefully remove it with tweezers.

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