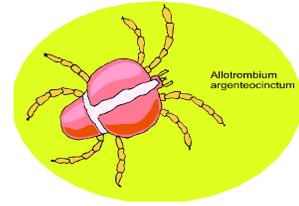


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Targeting Lyme Disease



If your job takes you outdoors, or if that's where you spend your free time, then you need to know about ticks and Lyme Disease.

A tick is a small round, eight-legged creature, similar to an insect. It lives by sucking the blood of other animals. In doing so, it spreads diseases, including the bacterium that causes Lyme Disease.

Lyme Disease starts as a red, slowly expanding rash with a bull's eye appearance, occurring a week or two after the bite. Fatigue, fever, headache, a stiff neck, muscle aches and joint pain follow. If Lyme Disease is untreated, some sufferers develop arthritis, nerve abnormalities such as inflammation of the nervous system, palsy and heart problems. The disease is rarely fatal, but the results can be chronic and disabling.

Lyme Disease should be treated promptly with antibiotics, so it's important to recognize the symptoms and get medical help. The skin eruption might not occur, and it sometimes appears somewhere other than the site of the bite. The next phase feels like the flu, with a low-grade fever; sleep disturbances, fatigue and aches.

Preventing tick bites is a better strategy than having to suffer the effects and undergo treatment.

Avoid tick habitat, especially in the spring and summer. Ticks like a moist, shaded environment with low-lying vegetation such as grass or shrubs. Deer and rodents, hosts for other stages of the Lyme Disease cycle, must also be present.

Wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be seen and removed more easily. Wear a long-sleeved shirt and tuck pants into socks or boot tops to keep ticks away from the skin.

High boots provide additional protection. You can apply insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) to clothing and exposed skin, and the insect repellent permethrin to clothing. Follow all directions for safe application.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it with fine-tipped tweezers. Grasp the tick firmly and close to the skin. Pull the tick's body away from the skin with a steady motion. Do not use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish or other products to remove the tick. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic. Watch for signs of early Lyme Disease and if you are concerned, seek medical treatment.

Tick populations can be reduced from outdoor work and living areas by removing leaf litter, brush piles and wood piles, and clearing trees and brush that provide habitat for ticks, deer and rodents. The effectiveness of pesticide applications is being evaluated by researchers, as is the use of a vaccine to prevent Lyme Disease in those at a high risk of exposure.

Safety Tip: If you go out in the woods or fields today, watch for ticks. They spread disease, which untreated can have serious long-term health effects.

