

# Fact Sheet: Lyme Disease

## What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria, transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected deer tick. This tick is about the size of a sesame seed. The peak activity time for ticks is late May through early autumn. Common sites for a tick bite are the thigh, trunk, groin and armpits.

## What are the symptoms?

- Skin rash or redness at the site of the tick bite, which usually enlarges and may look like a bulls eye
- Redness of cheeks and under the eyes
- Fever and headache
- Stiff neck
- Fatigue
- Sore and aching muscles and joints
- Swollen glands

Symptoms usually appear within 3-32 days, with an average of 7-10 days.

## How is it spread?

The tick attaches to a host animal such as a mouse or deer that is infected with the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. After feeding on the animal and releasing, the tick then waits for a new host, which could be another animal or a human. The tick must be attached to the host for at least 24 hours to transfer the bacteria.

## How is it treated?

If you have any of the symptoms, especially a skin rash, see your doctor immediately for evaluation and treatment. Antibiotics can clear up the rash and kill the bacteria within days and may prevent complications.

## How is it prevented?

If you live or work in high-risk areas (such as densely wooded places or places with high deer traffic), you should take these preventive measures:

- If you must walk or play in such areas, wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, high socks (tuck your pants into the socks) and sneakers. Apply tick repellent, such as DEET or Autan, to skin, or permethrin to pant legs and sleeves. Wear light colored clothes to make spotting ticks easier.
- Check your skin for ticks at least once a day.
- Use tweezers to remove a tick. Grip its body firmly and pull straight out of the skin. If you use your fingers to remove a tick, cover your fingers with a protective covering and then wash your hands afterward.
- Destroy the tick by drowning it in alcohol or kerosene after you have removed it from your skin. Be sure to keep these solutions out of the reach of children.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self -diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.*

