

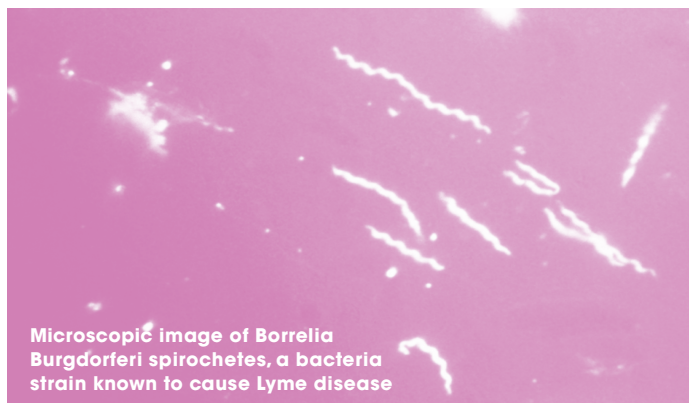


TICK TALK INFO

TICK BITES & LYME DISEASE PREVENTION

Ticks are especially abundant & seeking a host from early Spring to late Autumn. This is a good time to educate everyone about how they can prevent tick bites. Ticks carry and spread many different serious and potentially fatal illnesses. The most commonly known is Lyme disease, but there are also co-infections that the tick can also transmit (ticks are related to spiders and mites). Ticks are among the most efficient carriers of disease because they attach firmly when sucking blood, feed slowly and may go unnoticed for a considerable time while feeding. Having fed, the ticks will eventually drop off their host.

Ticks can be found in various environments, most often in or near wooded areas, clearing of bushes, fallen leaves and tall grasses. People may come in contact with ticks just by walking/running/cycling through infested areas or by brushing up against infested vegetation such as leafy trees or shrubs. Remember you can be bitten anywhere even in your back garden.



WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterial infection carried by a tick. It has quickly become one of the most common diseases in Europe and it's 2nd to the mosquito for carrying diseases. The risk of Lyme disease is on the increase in all areas in Ireland due to global warming. Nymphs are capable of transmitting the most disease to humans during their appearance in Spring and early Summer. Most Lyme disease transmission to humans occurs from nymphs (baby ticks) infected the previous season from small rodents such as mice, birds, rabbits and anything with blood running through their veins.

Lyme Disease affects humans, horses, cats and dogs (but not deer or rodents). Incubation: 3 – 32 days. Non-specific and variable symptoms may appear just after a bite but that will deteriorate. If diagnosed early, treatment with antibiotics is generally successful (21 days of high dose of doxycycline antibiotic immediately at least 200 mg twice daily, however, GP could recommend a higher dose for a longer period).



CLINICAL STAGES SYMPTOMS

Stage 1 – A bullseye rash appears in about 50% of cases. Flu-like illness (e.g. lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, general fatigue, headaches). Patients may miss Stage 1 and develop the disease months to years after initial bite.

Stage 2 – Migratory joint pain, head & neck pain, or muscle pain. Bell's palsy (facial paralysis) & severe fatigue. Cardiac problems, bladder irritation (you could have some or all of these symptoms).

Stage 3 – Neurological changes, tingling, numbness, tremors, nerve pain, poor control of temperature, brain fog, dizziness, sleep disturbance, optic neuritis, depression, panic attacks, muscle weakness, tissue damage, meningitis and chronic arthritis.

TICK & THEIR HOSTS

Larva (baby, 6 legs): Small rodents such as small mice, birds, rabbits, hares. Nymph (immature adults, 8 legs after first moulting): Small rodents, dogs, humans, adult: Deer, occasionally horses and humans – ticks lay between 2,000 – 3,000 eggs.

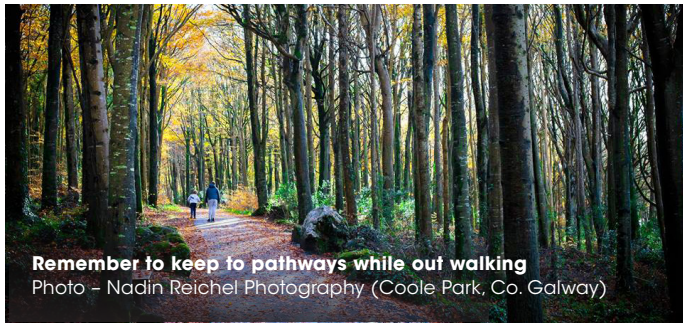
TICK LIFE CYCLE

- ▶ Larvae hatch in the Summer.
- ▶ Nymphs emerge the following Spring.
- ▶ Adults emerge in fall, lay eggs in Spring.

TICK HABITAT

Know where to expect ticks: Ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in or near wooded or grassy areas. Workers at risk should know about signs & symptoms of Lyme disease. Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots and head covering. Try to wear light colour clothing because it makes ticks easier to detect. Tuck trouser cuffs in socks or boots, closed covering shoes. Tape the area where pants overlap boots or socks so ticks cannot crawl under clothing. Some small ticks can actually crawl through socks.





PREVENTING TICK BITES AND DISEASE

The following precautions should be taken:

- ▶ Use insect repellent that contains 20 – 30% DEET.
- ▶ Wear clothing that has been treated with Permethrin spray for bugs.
- ▶ Take a shower as soon as you can after working outdoors.
- ▶ Drying outdoor clothes at high temperatures after outdoor exposure.
- ▶ Look for ticks under armpits, behind knees, in the hair and groin. If you remove a tick promptly and use antiseptic it can reduce your chances of getting infected.

CHECK

Check yourself for ticks every couple of hours when working in wooded or grassy areas. Most ticks seldom attach quickly and rarely transmit infection until they have been attached (it is not known how long they are attached to spread disease). Perform daily tick checks of your body after working in potentially tick infested areas. If ticks are found crawling on the outside of clothes, they can be removed with a ring of tape made around the hand leaving the sticky side out. Remove any tick promptly. The mouth parts of a tick are barbed and may remain embedded and lead to infection if not removed promptly.

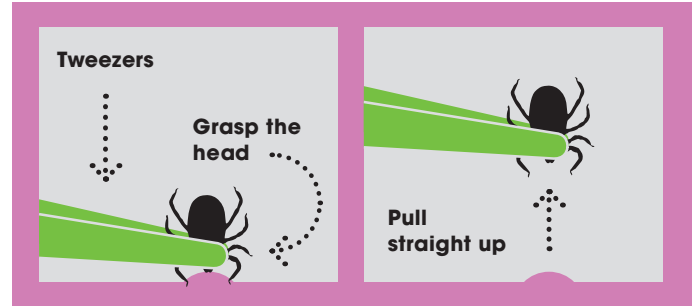
DO NOT

- ▶ Burn the tick with a match.
- ▶ Cover it with petroleum jelly or nail polish.
- ▶ Do not use bare hands to remove a tick because tick secretions may carry disease.



REMOVAL OF TICK

- ▶ Grasp the tick firmly with a tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
- ▶ Gently, but firmly, pull it straight out.
- ▶ If tweezers are not available, grasp the tick with a piece of tissue or cloth or whatever can be used as a barrier between your fingers and the tick. Fine thread can also be used.
- ▶ Wash the bite area and your hands thoroughly with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to the bite site.



If you experience a rash that looks like a bullseye (or a rash anywhere on the body) and/or an unexplained illness accompanied by fever following a tick bite, you should consult your GP as soon as possible. Be sure to inform your GP that you had a tick bite & that the tick was attached. If you do not treat, you may later develop chronic Lyme disease which can cause severe arthritic, nerve pain, effect the spinal cord, brain and/or heart, cause severe back pain and other symptoms.

Diseases carried by ticks can be treated with antibiotics but early diagnosis and treatment are very important. Your GP will prescribe antibiotics for 21 days and you could be severely fatigued while recovering from infection.




DISPOSAL OF TICK

Ticks can be safely disposed of by burning. If you want to have the tick identified, do not use alcohol, pop into sealed bag and freeze straight away, note when you were bitten and where. The best way to prevent tick-borne illnesses is to avoid tick bites. This includes avoiding known tick infested areas. However, if employees must work in wooded areas or areas with tall grass and weeds, they should know the precautions that they can take to help prevent tick bites and decrease the risk of disease.

LOOKING AHEAD TO RECOVERY

Antibiotics recommended, allow yourself plenty of time to rest. If you are worried about ongoing symptoms contact your GP and Infectious Disease Specialist in your local hospital. Lyme requires a clinical diagnosis which may be supported by blood tests, however blood tests alone should not be used to rule out a Lyme diagnosis. If you are rebitten by an infected tick you can get Lyme disease again, continue to practice prevention.



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IT'S TIME TO TACKLE LYME