



## Lyme disease: It's Okay to Get Ticked Off

Deer ticks live in Ontario and surrounding counties. Some of them carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Every year a few people in our county are bitten by a tick and get Lyme disease.

### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a sickness that you can get from ticks. It affects your skin, joints, brain, and heart. It was first identified in Connecticut in the 1970s. In the US it is most common in Northeastern states from Massachusetts to Maryland and in North-central states, particularly Minnesota and Wisconsin.

### How do you get it?

You get Lyme disease from a tick bite. The longer a tick is attached, the more likely it is to give you Lyme disease. Not all tick bites cause Lyme disease. It has to be a specific type of tick that carries a specific type of bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In the Northeastern US, the only tick known to carry this type of bacteria is the "deer tick" or "blacklegged tick". This tick is smaller and darker than most other ticks.



Source of Tick Picture: Stafford K, Tick Management Handbook, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, 2004

### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is the bull's eye rash (pictured below). If you see a rash that looks similar, it is important that you see a doctor. He or she needs to identify the rash to tell you if you have Lyme disease or not.

Early symptoms usually happen anywhere from 3 to 30 days after the bite. Other early symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Chills/fever
- Headache
- Muscle/ joint aches
- Swollen glands
- Other types of rashes



Sometimes a person can be bitten by a tick, get the sickness, and not know it. Symptoms may not be noticed for weeks or months. Later symptoms can include:

- Bell's palsy (unable to move one side of face)
- Meningitis or encephalitis (inflammation of spinal cord or brain covering)
- Shooting pains
- Heart palpitations (racing)
- Dizziness
- Joint pain

#### What is the treatment?

If the sickness is caught early enough, most people recover fully after taking antibiotics prescribed by a doctor.

#### How can I prevent Lyme disease?

Checking for ticks

- Check yourself, your children, and your pets for ticks after being outside.

Clothing

- Wear light-colored clothes, so ticks can be seen and removed more easily.
- Wear long sleeves and pants tucked into your shoes when participating in outside activities.

Environment

- Keep yards tick-free. Mow grass often and clear away fallen branches.
- Keep yards deer-free. Ticks live where deer live. Take measures to discourage deer from entering your yard.

Repellents

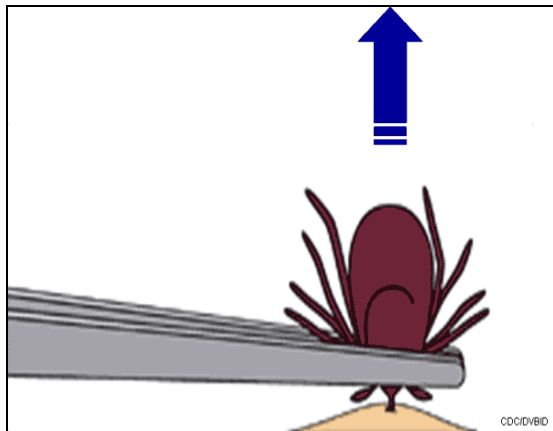
- For skin
  - **DEET** is safe for children and adults **when used as directed.**



- Pick the percentage you need based on the amount of protection you need. If you are going to be outside for a long time, pick a higher percentage.
- **Picardin** has been used in other parts of the world for a long time and has been available in the US for a few years.
- Natural repellents: may be more effective for mosquitoes than for ticks
  - **Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus** and **p-Mentane-3,8-diol** (chemically synthesized version of oil of lemon eucalyptus)
  - **Oil of Citronella**
- For clothing
  - **Permethrin** is used only for clothing. It is NOT used on your skin.

### What to do if you find that a tick has bitten you?

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick. Try not to crush the tick.
2. Grasp it as close to your skin as possible and pull the tick's body away slowly and steadily.
3. Wash your skin with soap and warm water.
4. If you or your doctor wants the tick identified, you can send it in to Ontario County Public Health Department. For instructions, please contact Ontario County Public Health at (585-396-4343)





Do NOT use:

- Petroleum jelly
- A hot match
- Nail Polish
- Alcohol
- Oil

These methods DO NOT work, can be dangerous and may actually increase your risk of getting infected. Summer in the Finger Lakes means enjoying a variety of outdoor activities. By being aware of ticks and taking a few simple precautions it is possible to decrease your risk of getting Lyme disease this season. Additionally, by checking for rashes and reporting symptoms to your doctor, it is possible to catch Lyme disease in its early stages when it is easiest to treat.

For more information on Lyme see: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub\\_lyme.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_lyme.htm)

For more information on mosquito and tick repellents see: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/publications/2737/> and <http://npic.orst.edu/repel.html>