

Lyme Disease Basics

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne illness in the U.S. caused by an infection from bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is carried by “deer” ticks.

Blacklegged Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)



Not all tick species carry the Lyme disease bacteria but may cause other health problems. Other common ticks are:

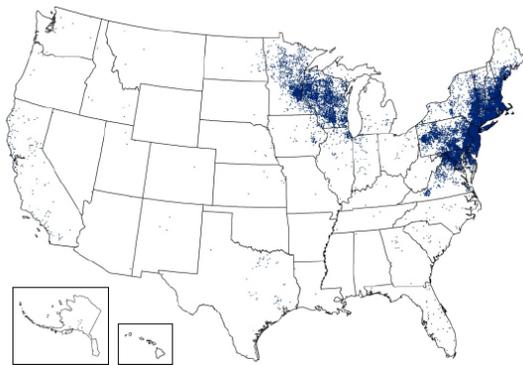


Lone Star tick



Dog tick

Ticks take up to 24 hours from the time of first contact with the skin before they actually start to feed on the host's blood. The tick must remain firmly attached to the skin for 24-48 hours to pass the bacteria that causes Lyme disease to humans. More than 90% of cases in the U.S. have been reported from only 10 states.

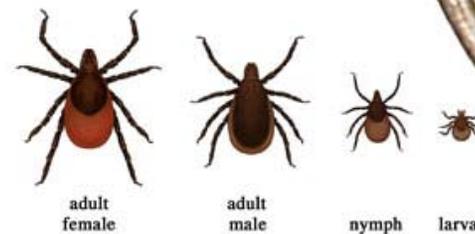


Information compiled by Dr. Michael Duke, MD from Linden Hu and C. Benjamin Beard articles printed in *UpToDate* located at www.uptodate.com

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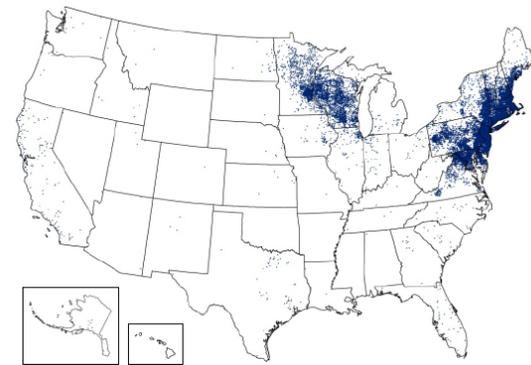


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Lyme Disease

Symptoms can start days or weeks after a tick bite. They are:

- Rash at the site of the tick bite often appearing within a month of the bite. It is red but its center can be the color of your skin. It may get bigger over a few days. Some describe the rash looking similar to “a bull’s eye”.
- Fever
- Feeling tired
- Body aches and pains
- Heart problems such as a slowed heart rate
- Headache and stiff neck
- Feelings of pain, weakness, and numbness

Treatment: Antibiotics, based upon the stage of disease and types of symptoms, are the primary treatment for Lyme disease. Although almost all patients recover after antibiotics, the rate of recovery varies depending upon the symptoms and may take several weeks to months after finishing antibiotic treatment.

Prevention: Precautions can be taken to prevent ticks from attaching to skin in tick-infested areas where Lyme disease and /or other tick-borne illnesses are common.

- Wear protective clothing. Keep ticks away from the skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into socks.
- Use a tick repellent or tick-killing product. The most common repellent used against ticks in the United States is DEET. Products with DEET work in most circumstances, repel insects for approximately two hours, and may be applied to clothing. Follow all instructions and precautions on product labels.
- Inspect your clothes and skin. Wearing light-colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks on clothes. Develop a habit of inspecting the skin for ticks when coming in from the outdoors. Inspect areas where ticks most often bite- including the armpits, groin, backs of the knees, belt line, and the scalp. Showering or bathing may help detect ticks and wash off ticks that are not yet attached to your skin.
- Removing ticks within 36 hours makes transmission of the Lyme disease bacteria very unlikely.

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