

Lyme Disease Fact Sheet

What causes Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by bacteria spread by small spider-like creatures called ticks. There are two types of ticks: deer ticks (also known as blacklegged ticks) and dog ticks. Both types feed on the blood of humans and many different animals, but only deer ticks carry Lyme disease. Below, we provide a link where you can see the differences in how they look.

If a deer tick feeds on an infected animal, it becomes infected. Then, if it feeds on a human, the human can become infected and get Lyme disease.

What happens if you get Lyme disease?

Lyme disease can damage the tissues in your body. If the disease is not treated, it can make you feel tired and weak, and if it gets really bad, it can even harm your heart, nerves, liver, and joints.

What are the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease?

Symptoms of Lyme disease in humans usually appear 3 to 30 days after a bite from an infected tick. You should speak to your doctor right away if:

- You have a bull's-eye rash which is a rash that spreads outwards and is getting bigger, or any unusual rash, *or*
- You have a fever, chills, headache, a stiff neck, muscle and joint aches, or swollen lymph nodes, or you're more tired than normal or you don't have your normal appetite

To see pictures of rashes, please visit the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) or the [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website.

How is Lyme disease treated?

It is important to get health care within 3 days of getting a tick bite. Speak to a health care professional about the possibility of Lyme disease if:

- You were in [a location where ticks might live](#) and
 - You feel unwell, with flu-like symptoms *or*
 - You get a rash

If you have been bitten by an infected tick, **a health care professional may:**

- Prescribe an antibiotic right away *or*
- Wait and see if you get signs or symptoms of an infection that might be Lyme disease

How can I avoid getting a tick bite?

You might be at risk if you live in or visit a high-risk area, such as an area with woodlands, tall grasses, and bushes, or if you do outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. Check out the [Ontario Lyme Disease Map 2017](#) to see higher-risk areas.

Here are a few things you can do to avoid getting bitten by a tick:

Clothing

- Wear light-coloured clothing. This makes it easier to see ticks.
- Wear closed-toed shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants tucked into your socks.

Draft—do not cite. Report is a work in progress and could change following public consultation.

- Kill any ticks that might be on clothing and gear by putting those items in a dryer on high heat for at least 60 minutes before washing them.

Wear effective bug repellent

- Apply a repellent that says “DEET” or “icaridin” on your clothes and exposed skin.
- Read the instructions to find out how often you need to apply it.

Check your skin

If you're in an area with woodlands, tall grasses, and bushes, or if you're doing outdoor activities such as hiking and camping:

- Check your skin often. Look for ticks behind the knees, on the head, and in the belly button, groin area, and underarm area.
- Have a shower soon after you get home.

Care for your pets

- Ask your vet about options to help keep ticks off your pets because:
 - Your pets could get bitten and get Lyme disease
 - Ticks on your pets might jump on you
- Check your pets' skin and remove any ticks you find (see below for how to do this)

Generally, Lyme disease occurs only when an infected tick attaches itself to your skin for at least 24 hours. So, if a tick has not attached itself to your body, your risk of getting infected is low.

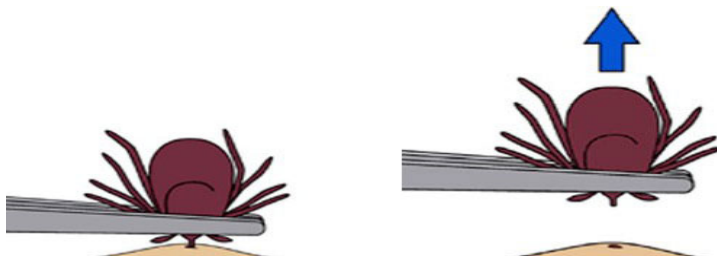
What does a deer tick look like?

- Deer ticks come in different sizes and colours, depending on their age and whether they have been feeding.
- Deer ticks can be very small and hard to see. For more information to help you tell the difference between deer ticks and dog ticks, visit the US [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website.

How can I safely remove a tick that's attached?

- Use fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible
- Pull backwards gently but firmly, using an even, steady pressure
- Once the tick has been removed, wash the skin and your hands thoroughly with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soapy water
- **Do not** use a smouldering match or cigarette, nail polish, petroleum jelly (e.g., Vaseline), liquid soap, or kerosene to remove a tick. These may cause the tick to inject bodily fluids into your wound.
- **Do not** use your fingers to remove the tick.
- **Do not** jerk or twist the tweezers while pulling the tick out.
- Once you have removed a tick, place it in a screw-top bottle and take it to your doctor or local health unit. They will figure out if it's a deer tick or a dog tick, and they will note this information. (Dog ticks don't cause Lyme disease.)

Safe tick removal



Draft—do not cite. Report is a work in progress and could change following public consultation.

Looking for more information?

Please contact us at evidence@hqontario.ca or 1-866-623-6868 if you have any questions or feedback about this fact sheet.

An associated guide on the management and investigation of early localized Lyme disease is available online. You can find it at www.hqontario.ca or www.publichealthontario.ca.

ISBN TBA (Print)

ISBN TBA (PDF)

© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2018

DRAFT