

Ticks and *Lyme borreliosis*

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How do you get Lyme disease?

Lyme disease (*Lyme borreliosis*) is transmitted by ticks that are infected with *Borrelia spirochaete* (a strain of bacteria). Humans can get it if they are bitten by an infected tick. It normally takes 24–48 hours for the bacteria in the tick to pass into the human after they bite. Therefore, if you remove a tick soon after being bitten you are very unlikely to develop Lyme Disease, even if the tick is infected.



Lyme borreliosis symptoms:

The early stage, and the most common, is the development of a rash (*erythema migrans*) at the site of the tick bite. This rash can appear 3–30 days after the bite. There is usually a single circular red mark that slowly spreads outwards over several days. A paler area of skin emerges on the inner part of the circle. It can range in size from a few up to 30cm. It is not usually painful or itchy. Other early symptoms tend to be flu-like with headache, joint pain and muscle aches. Later stages and further complications can affect different parts of the body.



Treatment: All stages will respond to antibiotics.

Tips to prevent infection:

- Wear long trousers and tuck them into your socks
- Wear light-coloured clothing – this makes ticks easier to see
- Walk in the centre of paths, away from vegetation
- Consider using an insect repellent – one that contains DEET 25% can be sprayed directly on to skin. Premethrin-based ones can be sprayed on to clothing
- Inspect your entire body every day for ticks paying special attention to your hair, underarms, behind the knees and groin
- To keep pets tick-free use vet-recommended treatments and check them daily for ticks
- Carry a tick remover

Tick removal:

- *Tweezers.* Use fine-tipped tweezers and grasp the tick as close as possible to the skin. Pull upwards with an even, steady pressure. Do not twist as this may cause the tick to regurgitate and increase the risk of infection.



- *Tick removal tool.* There are various tools. The tool is inserted from the side, lifted slightly and rotated two to three times. Twisting is OK with this method as the tool does not exert pressure on the mouth parts or abdomen in the way that tweezers do.

Further information can be obtained from www.bada-uk.org

