



# Lyme Disease and Ticks:

## Being Tick-Safe While Enjoying the Outdoors



Large Lone Star Tick: Photo courtesy of Diane Abell

Deer Tick, engorged Lone Star Tick: Photos courtesy of CDC/ James Gathany; William Nicholson

Deer with tick infested ear: Photo courtesy of NPS/ Fire Island National Seashore

### What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterial infection, which can be transmitted to humans by tick bites – generally by deer ticks. If not diagnosed and/or left untreated, the infection can pose serious health effects. Not all ticks carry the disease, but infection rates are on the rise and the U.S. Center for Disease Control now has over 21,000 cases reported each year. These numbers make Lyme the most common illness transmitted by any animal in the U.S. The northeast, including New York, is one of the areas where this disease is most commonly found. Though deer are primary hosts for adult ticks, they are not competent reservoirs of Lyme Disease.

### Know the Symptoms!

While some people show no reaction to Lyme disease, others are seriously affected by it. About 70% of infected people develop a rash called erythema chronicum migrans (ECM) a few days to weeks after the bite. This rash usually resembles a reddish “bull’s-eye” or an expanding red ring and is often accompanied by flu-like symptoms. These early symptoms generally subside on their own, but untreated patients can later develop more serious health complications, including arthritis and sometimes severe neurological problems. However, if treated early with antibiotics this could all be avoided.

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#### Common Signs of Infection:

-  Flu-like Symptoms
-  Headaches
-  Stiff Neck and/ or Joints
-  Fever
-  Muscle Aches
-  Numbness/ Tingling
-  Loss of Concentration



#### How to Avoid Tick Bites:

When in grassy, brushy or forested areas, people should take the following precautions to prevent being bitten.

-  Tuck your shirt into your pants and your pants into your socks.
-  Wear light colored clothes to easily spot ticks.
-  Inspect yourself while in tick habitats. This often works best with a hiking partner to check your back.
-  Apply bug repellent on your clothes in the lower part of your body. Carefully follow directions on label.
-  Thoroughly inspect your head and body when you get back from the field. It normally takes 24 to 48 hours for a

tick to transmit infection, so as long as you get it off before this time period you should be reasonably safe.

#### What To Do if Bitten:

- 1) Safely remove the tick as soon as possible by using fine tweezers, or a tick removing tool (these can be purchased from most outdoor safety suppliers). **DO NOT** squeeze the body of the tick! Grasp it as near to your skin as you can, and **GENTLY** pull it out.
- 2) Clean the bite and sterilize the area using rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.
- 3) If you accidentally break off the mouthparts, seek medical attention to remove them to avoid infection.
- 4) If you develop symptoms of Lyme disease see a physician immediately, making sure you tell the doctor that you were recently bitten by a tick.

For more information go to:

C&O Canal <http://www.nps.gov/choh>

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