



What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease (LD) is an infection caused by the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. This bacterium can be transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected tick.

Symptoms of LD usually occur within one to two weeks, but can occur as soon as three days or as long as a month, after a tick bite. Early symptoms of LD may include:



- A “bull’s eye” rash which spreads out from the tick bite
- General symptoms of fever, headache, muscle and joint pain

If diagnosed early, most cases of LD can be treated successfully with antibiotics. If left untreated, LD can affect the joints, the heart and the nervous system resulting in long-term health effects.

If you are concerned about LD, you should speak to your health care professional. It is important to inform them when and where you were bitten by a tick.



What is a tick?

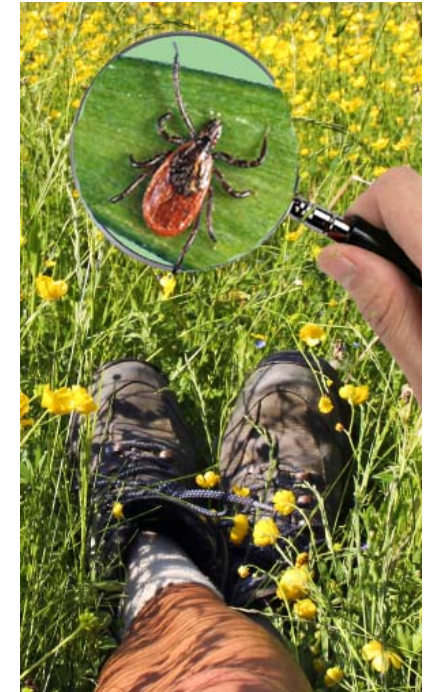
Ticks are similar to mites, about the size of a sesame seed, which feed on blood. They move about the ground slowly or they settle on tall grass and bushes until they attach themselves to a person or animal passing by. There are many different types of ticks but only a few are capable of carrying the bacteria which causes LD. In Ontario the tick that is known to transmit LD is *Ixodes scapularis*, also known as the black-legged tick or the deer tick.



What is being done in the Province of Ontario to monitor and control Lyme Disease?

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care gathers information about Lyme disease to try to determine where individuals may have come in contact with infected ticks. Encouraging the public to submit ticks that are found attached to themselves or to family members to their local health units is another form of tick surveillance.

Lyme Disease



For tick submission, protection, and general information contact the Vector-Borne Disease Team at 519-663-5317, ext. 2300

For questions regarding human health and Lyme Disease information, contact the Infectious Disease Control Team at 519-663-5317, ext. 2330

Middlesex-London Health Unit
50 King St., London, ON N6A 5L7
tel: (519) 663 - 5317 • fax: (519) 663 - 9581
health@mlhu.on.ca

Strathroy Office - Kenwick Mall
51 Front St. E., Strathroy ON N7G 1Y5
tel: (519) 245 - 3230 • fax: (519) 245 - 4772



What is the Middlesex-London Health Unit doing to monitor and control Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is a reportable disease and the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) receives notification if anyone living in the area has, or is suspected of having, LD. Health unit staff contacts these individuals to determine where and when they were exposed to the infection. Based on recent tick submissions to the Middlesex-London Health Unit, it appears that the area does not have an established population of the ticks that are capable of transmitting LD. Members of the public are encouraged to continue to submit any ticks that are found attached to themselves or to family members for identification. It is important to inform Health Unit Staff where and when you were exposed to the tick.



Is there a concern with Lyme Disease when traveling?

In Ontario, Lyme disease-carrying ticks are more commonly found along the north shore of Lake Erie, particularly in Long Point, Turkey Point, and Rondeau Provincial Park. Most recently, they have been found in the areas of Point Pelee National Park, Wainfleet Bog Conservation Area, Prince Edward Point Wildlife Area, and St. Lawrence Islands National Park. About half of the LD cases that are reported each year in Ontario acquired the infection outside of the province. Within Canada, parts of British Columbia and Manitoba have areas where Lyme disease-carrying ticks are found. Ticks carrying LD are commonly found in the United States along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Virginia and in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Europe also has areas where LD carrying ticks are present. Be sure to be aware of the risk when doing outdoor activities in these areas

- Tips to remember...**
- Wear light coloured clothing and DEET
 - Check yourself and family members
 - Submit ticks to the health unit for identification



What can I do to protect myself against Lyme Disease?

A few simple steps can help to reduce the risk of getting bit by a tick.

- Wear light coloured clothes to make it easier to spot ticks.
- Wear long pants, a long sleeved shirt and closed footwear with socks when walking in grassy or wooded areas. Tuck your pants inside your socks.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET. Follow the directions on the container.
- Check yourself and family members including pets after leaving an area where ticks may live including long grass, wooded areas
- Keep the grass cut short in areas around your house and cottage where people and pets may walk.

How do I remove a tick?

It is important to remove a tick promptly in prevent infection. Transmission of *Borrelia burgdorferi* is unlikely to occur when the tick was attached for less than a day. For safe removal follow these instructions:



- Try to wear gloves when handling an engorged (blood filled) tick.
- Use tweezers and grab the tick as close to the head as possible. Do not use your fingers.
- Pull the tick upward and away from the body with steady pressure.
- Once the tick has been removed, clean the area with soap and water. Seek medical attention if concerned about possible skin infection.
- Wash your hands
- If possible, save the tick so it can be submitted to the health unit for identification. Put the tick in a container with a tight fitting lid
- Label the container with the name and birth date of the person bitten.
- Submit the tick to one of the following MLHU locations: Kenwick Mall, 51 Front St. E., Strathroy, or 50 King St., London.