

# Health & Wellness Corner

June 2021

## How to Avoid Lyme Disease



Lyme disease is a chronic infection spread by tick bites. It can cause a rash, joint pain and muscle weakness or meningitis. Symptoms can present themselves years after you receive a bite. However, when Lyme disease is caught early, it can be easily treated to prevent long-term problems.

Lyme disease is a common tick-borne illness, and it's important to take steps to avoid a tick bite whenever possible. Before you head outside, whether during the day or at night, a few simple precautions can help reduce your risk of a tick bite.

### Wear the right clothes

If you are going to be outdoors, especially in wooded areas or places with tall grass, wear clothing that covers your skin and reduces your risk for a tick bite. The best clothing for outdoor adventures in tick-infested areas includes:

- Hiking boots
- Long pants
- Long-sleeved shirts
- Tall socks

You might think it's too hot to wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts on a summer day, but there are several fabric options that will help keep your body cool. Remember, keeping your skin covered makes it harder for ticks to attach to your body.

## Check for ticks immediately

At the end of every day, check your entire body for ticks. If possible, ask a friend to check your back, neck, hair and scalp for ticks. It will also help to shower right away. Many ticks don't attach immediately, so taking a shower increases the chance that they may wash away before they even bite you.

After your shower, carefully examine your body again, including your belly button, armpits and behind your ears, to ensure there aren't any ticks attached. If you do find a tick, remove it immediately with tweezers. Make sure to get the entire tick.

Don't forget to check Fido, too. If your dog has been on a hike with you, be sure to check them thoroughly for ticks.

Ticks can range from the size of a poppy seed to the size of a pencil eraser. In most cases, a tick has to be on you for more than 36 hours to transfer Lyme disease, so it's important to check for ticks after each day spent outdoors.

## Use tick repellent

Insect repellents that are more than 20% DEET are effective at keeping away ticks. All members of your family should apply tick repellent before heading outside, but be sure to avoid your eyes and mouth.

You should also treat pets with a monthly flea and tick repellent. These repellents often kill ticks that bite your pets within 24 hours, helping to keep them safe.

By taking these careful steps to prevent tick bites, you can help to ensure you aren't one of them.

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