

# BE LYME SMART



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Ticks are arachnids that feed on blood to survive. As external parasites, only their mouthparts enter the skin. Lyme disease is caused by bacteria transmitted by the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*).

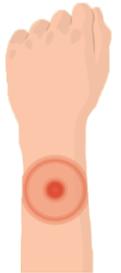
## WHAT IS THE CONCERN?

Lyme disease is the most common tickborne infection in both North America and Europe. Approximately 30,000 cases of Lyme disease are reported to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) every year. In Tompkins County, the number of Lyme disease cases nearly tripled from 2009 to 2011. Studies have shown that about 30% of ticks in Tompkins County, where Lyme disease is common (endemic), are infected with the Lyme disease bacteria (*Borrelia burgdorferi*). These infection rates are among the highest rates in New York State.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Ticks transmit infection only after they have taken a "blood meal" from their host; a tick that has not attached, and therefore has not become engorged, has not passed on any infection. Since the tick that transmits Lyme disease must feed for more than 36 hours before transmission of infection, the risk of acquiring Lyme disease from an observed tick bite is only 1.2 to 1.4 percent, even in endemic areas. The most visible sign of Lyme disease is a characteristic red "bull's eye" rash called erythema migrans (EM).

The rash appears in 70-80% of patients, starting at the site of the bite, expanding in size over days or weeks. Other early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease include: fatigue, loss of energy, headaches, neck stiffness, fever, aching joints and muscles, and swollen lymph nodes. If untreated, Lyme can affect the heart, joints, and nervous system.

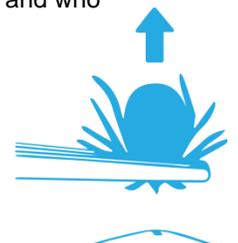


## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND AN ATTACHED TICK?

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause parts of the tick to remain in the skin. If you are unable to remove the tick completely, you should make an appointment with your health care provider to remove the tick.
3. Dispose of a live tick by submerging in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush the tick with your fingers.
4. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
5. A single dose of doxycycline, a preventative antibiotic, may be recommended for patients in endemic areas, who have had the tick attached for more than 36 hours, who are older than 8 years of age and are not pregnant, and who are able to take the medication within 72 hours of tick removal.

## SHOULD I HAVE MY BLOOD TESTED, OR SEND THE TICK IN FOR TESTING?

Routine bloodwork is not recommended, since even people who become infected will not have a positive blood test until approximately two to six weeks after the infection develops. Testing of individual ticks is also not recommended, since even if the test shows the tick is infected, that does not mean the patient has been infected.



**Wear long pants and sleeves.** When walking in wooded areas, tuck your pants into your socks. Wear light colors to easily see ticks.



**Repel & Kill**  
Apply insect repellent with 20% or higher concentration of DEET (permethrin sprayed on clothing kills ticks on contact).



**Shower within 2 hours of outdoor activity.** This makes an ideal time to check for ticks on your body and in your hair.



**Throw your clothes in the dryer for 1 hour on high heat** when you get home. This will kill ticks that cling to your clothes.



**Check your pets.** Use tick control products to prevent family pets from bringing ticks home.