

# Ticks and Lyme Disease

INFORMATION & RESOURCES ON HOW TO AVOID VIRUSES AND BITES FROM TICKS

**Lyme disease** is an acute inflammatory disease characterized by skin changes, joint inflammation and flu-like symptoms caused by bacteria transmitted by the bite of a deer tick.

In the Northeastern U.S., the white-footed field mouse is the origin of the Lyme bacteria. When the deer ticks and their nymphs bite these mice, they become carriers of the Lyme bacteria. After the ticks leave the mice, they are transported mainly by deer. Although 50% of ticks may carry the Lyme disease there are other diseases that they can carry.

Deer ticks are very small. The immature (nymph stage) ticks, capable of transmitting Lyme, are the size of a poppy seed. Ticks will attach themselves anywhere on the body and if you are infected, a rash may be found where bitten.

The mature deer tick is still much smaller than more well-known ticks like dog ticks and wood ticks. The mature male is black and the mature female (slightly larger) is dark red and black. They can expand to 2 to 3 times their normal girth when engorged with blood from feeding.

The early symptoms of Lyme disease may be mild and easily missed. Untreated, the disease can cause a number of health problems. Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stage of the infection usually recover rapidly and completely.

In 60-80% of cases the first symptom is a rash, that:

- Occurs at or near the site of the tick bite.
- Is a “bulls-eye” circular patch or solid red patch that grows larger.
- Appears between three days and one month after the tick bite.
- Has a diameter of two to six inches.
- Lasts for about three to five weeks.
- May or may not be warm to the touch.
- Is usually not painful or itchy.
- Sometimes leads to multiple rashes.



**Powassan encephalitis** has been found in up to 10% of the tick population in the Hudson Valley Region of New York and has far greater health hazards, including disruption to the central nervous system, encephalitis and meningitis. About 10 to 15 percent of reported cases result in death.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- When outdoors, wear long sleeved shirts and pants.
- Apply 20-35% DEET containing insect repellent sparingly to the skin.
- Do **not** apply 100% DEET directly to the skin as it is **HARMFUL**. Use this concentration on clothing and equipment only.
- Apply repellent to clothing.
- Tuck pants into socks to deter ticks.
- White socks make them more visible.
- Hiking gaiters can also be worn.
- Apply double sided tape around ankles (ticks).
- Look for unusual bites, swelling, or irritation and seek medical attention if necessary.
- All tick bites at work should be reported.
- Workers should be trained on problematic insects in their work area and how to avoid them.

For more information and resources visit:

[www.cseany.org/safety](http://www.cseany.org/safety)



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