

Lyme Disease Hints

Prevention beats removal:

Lyme disease is carried by the misnamed Deer Tick (the disease is carried by a white tailed mouse, not deer). The disease is caused by a spirochete that is neither bacteria nor a virus. It can change phase and become hidden to testing well after the initial acute infection. The carrier is a very small tick and looks like a very small dot with legs, when seen under a magnifier. They are found in grasses (including your lawn) in gardens, and of course in the woods. You will not likely see them on your clothes unless you wear white clothes. Keeping them off your body is the key. Wear long pants and long sleeve shirts, if possible—a lightweight tight weave is protective. Old white shirts allow you to see the ticks-sometimes. Repellents can be very helpful. Unfortunately, natural repellents have not proven very effective. DEET (no more than 40- 60 %, (no additional protection at higher %, but more skin reactions) may be applied to exposed skin at wrists and ankles (wash off after no longer needed). However, spraying DEET, on the clothes, at the cuffs and around the waistbands and bottoms of shirts at waist, can be very useful. Also, spray the tops of shoes and the outer collar of shirts as well as along the button line. There are also mild insecticides for use on clothing only that will kill ticks and are designed for several washings. Apply these on clothing OFF the body and let dry before donning the clothing. I recommend keeping a set of clothes that are treated thusly for gardening and hiking and playing in infested areas. Finally, nightly inspection is essential. A larger magnifier, magnifying mirror, and a good set of eyes examine your body from head to toe paying particular attention to behind and around knees, waist areas and around genitals and underarms. But they can be anywhere, including the navel. They prefer soft skin areas. If in doubt, use the magnifier, you will see legs on that 'scab' or freckle—remove it. Keep a kit in a bag where you will inspect.

Try to inspect for and remove ticks in a place, like the bathroom where you can find the tick if you drop it. Who needs a live tick in the rug? Placing a removed tick in the bowl of the sink allows you to crush and wash with ease.

Found a tick on me!

If the tick is not attached, pick it off, crush it, and throw it down a drain. If it comes off easily, do the same. Some say that putting an ice cube on it will relax its grip. Most other 'treatments' including heat from a match (ouch!) to petroleum jelly have little effect. Sometimes, just a fingernail can scrape it off in the early attachment. Otherwise, sharp tweezers and/or tick removers are applied as low as possible on the body of the tick. The tick is **firmly and slowly** pulled off your body. Use a magnifier to see how well your tool is grabbing the tick and after you think it is removed look closely. Crush and dispose. Apply a multi-antiseptic and antibiotic ointment to the site. (Note: the "red bull's eye rash" says little more than the tick was attached for a while; it only indicates that there has been a local reaction.

Having a tick analyzed will make little difference since most ticks are female (disease carriers) and you won't know if it is carrying the spirochete (the county does not test the tick for infection) until after symptoms occur. Generally, if you remove a tick within 24 hours of its attachment, it will not have had a chance to infect you. If the tick is engorged (it is now about a 1/16th to an 1/8th inch in diameter and clearly visible) when you remove it, **assume it has had a chance to infect you**. Since testing in the 1st week is seldom accurate, taking natural measures to strengthen the immune system and fight infection can be very useful. Your Body Can Fight the bug!