



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 19: May 6th – 10th, 2024

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Introduction

With all the warm weather, people are spending more time enjoying being outdoors. However, more time spent outside increases our exposure to bugs. With that in mind, we need to stay aware of ticks and the diseases they carry, such as Lyme Disease.

Monday – What is Lyme Disease:

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgorferi* and is transmitted to humans through a bite of infected ticks. If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system. Lyme disease is diagnosed based on symptoms, physical findings (e.g., rash) and the possibility of exposure to infected ticks. Most cases of Lyme Disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics. Steps to prevent Lyme disease include using insect repellent, removing ticks promptly, applying pesticides, and reducing tick habitat. The Ticks that transmit Lyme disease can occasionally transmit other tick-borne diseases as well.

Tuesday – Signs and Symptoms of Untreated Lyme Disease

Early Symptoms:

- Chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, swollen lymph nodes.
- The Bulls Eye Rash (Erythema Migraines) can occur in 70-80% of infected people. Begins at the site of the tick bite and averages about 7 days. May feel warm to touch and itchy or painful. May also appear on any are of the body.

Later Symptoms:

- Severe headaches and neck stiffness, additional rash, facial palsy and loss of muscle tone or droop on one or both sides of the face; pain in tendons, muscles and joints; heart palpitations; dizziness or shortness of breath; nerve pain; shooting pains, numbness or tingling in hands and feet and problems with short term memory.

Wednesday – How to remove a tick:

- Use fine tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible.
- Pull upward with steady or even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick, this can cause the mouth parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with tweezers, leave it along and let the skin heal.
- After removing tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or iodine scrub.
- Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container or flushing down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Thursday – Treatment:

People who are treated with the right antibiotics in the early stages of the disease recover rapidly and completely. Most times it's treated orally but if the disease has caused neurological or cardiovascular issues it may need to be treated by intravenous drugs. The sooner you get treatment the better, the faster the recovery time and the severity of the symptoms is much less.

Friday –

Frequently asked question: If you have had Lyme disease once will you always have it?

Answer: False. Most patients treated right away with antibiotics will recover rapidly and completely.

Free Speech Friday: Have you or someone you know been affected with Lyme disease? How long was recovery? What advice would you give someone? What things should you look out for?