

LYME DISEASE FACT SHEET

Lyme disease is caused by a type bacteria referred to as a spirochete. These bacteria live in the gut of 2 types of ticks; Western Black legged tick *Ixodes pacificus* and *Ixodes scapularis*.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Lyme disease can affect many body systems. Illness occurs in stages. Early illness may begin with a skin rash called erythema migrans. This rash occurs in 60-80% of infected persons. Early symptoms may also include fever, headache, mildly stiff neck, joint and muscle pain. If left untreated; arthritis, nervous system and heart disease can develop in some Lyme disease patients.

Who can get Lyme disease?

The western black legged tick has been found in 56 of the 58 counties of California. This tick is common in the humid coastal areas and on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range. Persons walking through cool moist areas with wild grasses and low vegetation in both urban and rural areas may come into contact with ticks. They are also found in leaf litter and on logs.

What is the treatment for Lyme disease?

Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics.

How is Lyme disease spread?

The western blacklegged tick passes the bacteria to humans during feeding. Generally it takes 36 hours of attachment and feeding for the bacteria to pass from the gut of the tick to the person being fed on.

How is Lyme disease prevented?

Avoid areas where ticks are known to occur. If you cannot avoid these areas then follow these prevention guidelines:

- Stay in the middle of the trail: avoid grassy areas, contact with logs, tree trunks, fallen branches, or tree limbs in wooded areas.
- Tuck pants into boots or socks, and shirt into pants
- Wear light colored clothing and long-sleeved shirts so ticks can be more easily seen
- Use a repellent registered for use against ticks. Repellents with DEET are effective and can be applied to the skin. Repellents with permethrin should be applied only to clothing. Always follow directions on the container and be especially careful when applying to children.
- Thoroughly check yourself and others for ticks during and up to three days after activities in tick-infested areas.
- If a tick is found prompt removal can prevent the transmission of infection.
 - Using tweezers, grasp the tick's mouthparts as close to the skin as possible. Gently pull the tick straight out, using a firm steady motion. Wash your hands and the bite site with soap and water. Apply an antiseptic to the bite site.
 - Consult your doctor if you develop any symptoms, especially a rash, within 30 days of the tick bite.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/> or Mosquito and Vector Control at <http://www.contracostamosquito.com/ticks.htm>