

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is an infection caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria. These bacteria are spread by the bite of blacklegged (deer) ticks, *Ixodes scapularis*. These ticks can be found sporadically throughout Quebec and Ontario.

BLACKLEGGED TICKS:

Ticks are typically small when unfed, (1 to 5 mm in length), and feed on blood. Ticks in the 'nymph' stage of development can be quite small (less than 1 mm in length). They cannot fly and they move quite slowly. Ticks usually come in contact with people or animals by positioning themselves on tall grass and bushes. Most tick bites are painless.



Blacklegged Tick



Nymph stage

If you frequent the areas where blacklegged ticks are established, examine yourself thoroughly for ticks. It is important to do this each day. Pay special attention to areas such as groin, scalp and armpits. Use a mirror to check the back of your body or have someone else check it.

Put a tick and flea collar on your pet and check them for ticks periodically. Speak to your veterinarian about available vaccines.

HOW DO TICKS TRANSMIT LYME DISEASE?

Ticks feed on blood by inserting their mouthparts into the skin of a person, or an animal. Most humans are infected through the bite of an immature tick called a nymph. Nymphs are tiny (less than 2 mm); they feed during the spring and summer months.

Ticks are most likely to transmit infection after being attached for more than 24 hours. Because of this delay, prompt detection and removal of ticks is one of the key methods of preventing Lyme disease.

TREATMENT:

In most circumstances in Quebec, antibiotic treatment is not necessary if someone has been bitten by a tick. If a tick is discovered attached to a person, the tick should be promptly removed (refer to diagram) and identified through a doctor or public health unit.

However, medical attention should be sought if any symptoms of early Lyme disease develop within 30 days of removal of the tick. If symptoms of Lyme disease develop, antibiotics should prevent further complications.

The earlier treatment is received, the better. If the initial infection is not treated, symptoms involving the heart, nervous system or joints can occur.

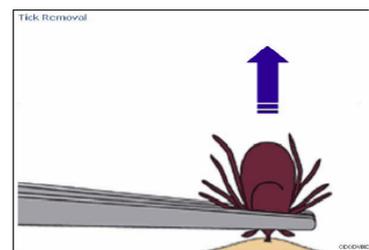
MORE INFO:

Original Publication:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/lyme-disease>

WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND AN ATTACHED TICK?

- Prompt removal of ticks from your skin will help prevent infection, since transmission of the Lyme disease agent usually requires the tick to be attached for more than 24 hours.
- Using fine-tipped tweezers or a tick key, carefully grasp the tick as close to your skin as possible. Pull it straight out, gently but firmly. A tick key is available for use at the starter shack.
- Don't squeeze it. Squeezing the tick can cause the Lyme disease agent to be accidentally introduced into your body.
- Don't put anything on the tick, or try to burn the tick off.
- After the tick has been removed, take it to your doctor or local health unit. Establishing the type of tick may help to assess your risk of acquiring Lyme disease.
- Thoroughly cleanse the bite site with rubbing alcohol and/or soap and water.



Tick Removal