

# Ticks & Lyme Disease

## Ticks:

A tick is a small, blood-sucking mite. Normally it lives on blood from wild animals, such as deer, but occasionally it may attach itself to humans when they walk through grass, rough vegetation, bracken or heathland. Most tick bites are harmless but, occasionally, the tick carries a small bacterium called *Borrelia burghdorferi* in its stomach. This bacterium causes Lyme Disease.

## What does a tick look like?



1

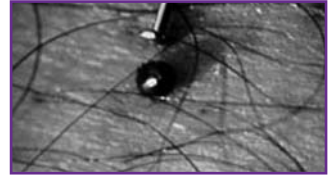


2



3

1. Female itck
  2. Male tick
  3. Engorged female tick
- N.B. A tick at nymph stage is the size of a large pin head



Tick on skin

## Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is an infection caused by bacteria that can be transmitted by ticks when they bite (not every tick carries Lyme Disease).

The infection can affect the skin, cause partial paralysis of the face (Bells Palsy) and cause serious illness of the nervous system, joints and heart. Ticks are tiny flat bodied, spider-like creatures that attach themselves to passing animals or persons for a blood meal. The highest risk was thought to be from April to October when the tick was most active and feeding, but research has shown that, in certain areas, ticks may be active throughout the year.

## Can it be prevented?

Yes. When visiting the countryside keep to open paths and always keep your skin covered (wear long trousers and long-sleeved shirts) whilst passing through areas of rough vegetation. Tuck trousers into socks if necessary.

Light coloured clothes will help you spot ticks and brush them off. At regular intervals check your clothing and exposed skin for ticks. At the end of the day completely check over your body for ticks.

Dogs are susceptible to Lyme Disease and may cause them to develop arthritis at an early age. Insect repellents and repellent collars for pets may help prevent ticks getting hold.



## What if I am bitten?

Remove the tick as soon as possible by grasping it close to the skin with a pair of tweezers.



Apply gentle pressure, twist anti-clockwise and pull upwards.

Pull slowly and consistently until it lets go.

Do not squeeze the body of the tick or attempt to remove the tick through burning or chemicals.

If the tick is accidentally pulled apart and the head remains in the skin, there may be a risk of infection from other microscopic organisms. This kind of infection is not related to Lyme Disease but can still be unpleasant. Consult a doctor if infection occurs.

Save the tick in a sealed container in case you develop symptoms later.

## Should I see my Doctor?

The disease might show itself as an expanding reddish, round rash in the area of the bite. Usually this will occur within three to thirty days of a bite.

Early symptoms may resemble influenza (flu), with swollen glands near the site, mild headaches, aching muscles and joints, and tiredness.

If you develop any of these symptoms and you suspect that a tick has bitten you, inform your doctor. Lyme Disease is treatable with antibiotics and the earlier it is diagnosed, the better.

## Contacts:

To order more leaflets, please contact Somerset County Council on 01823 355563. You can get more information from these websites: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or [www.bada-uk.org](http://www.bada-uk.org). Alternatively you can go on NHS Direct Digital TV via SKY or Freeview or call NHS Direct 24 hours a day on 0845 4647.

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