

What I Wish I Knew Before I was Diagnosed With Lyme Disease And Frequently-Asked Questions

By members of the Westchester Lyme Disease Support Group

1. If you discover it, save the tick! It strengthens your case that Lyme disease is a reasonable answer for your doctor to accept when symptoms appear.
2. Ask your doctor to base the diagnosis on clinical symptoms, not the blood test results. And urge him/her to prescribe the appropriate antibiotic for a minimum of 30 days at the first appearance of the suspicion of Lyme. The sooner you are correctly treated, the greater the chance of arresting the progress of the disease.
3. You can be bitten at ANY time of the year. If the temperature is 35°F, or above, the possibility of the ticks remaining active is as likely as it is in any other season.
4. Remember where you have been at the time you first became aware of symptoms striking you -- and as far back as several months earlier. Think carefully! Ever wider areas of the country are now considered endemic for tick presence, which indicates the greater likelihood for being bitten when outdoors.

Look to the habits of your pets as clues to the source of ticks indoors, and thus the risk to family members of being bitten.

In the Lower Hudson Valley region, the ratio of infected ticks to uninfected ticks is notably higher than in other areas of the country. Thus, if you are bitten, or begin to notice symptoms consistent with Lyme, recall this detail, and stress it when you speak with your physician.

There are many strains of the spirochete that are responsible for Lyme disease. Each causes its own peculiar, unique set of symptoms.
8. The disease does not confer immunity to its victims. *You can be re-infected repeatedly each time you are bitten.*
9. A two- or three-week course of antibiotic therapy is insufficient to insure that the spirochetes have been eradicated, or at the least brought under control. For an initial treatment, ask for a minimum of thirty (30) days of the appropriate antibiotic.
10. Symptoms may appear days, weeks, months or even years after the bite.
11. The dog vaccine does not protect your pet from contracting Lyme. It is not 100% effective; your veterinarian can verify this.
12. You will find conflicting opinions when the question arises: how rapidly is Lyme transmitted and symptoms begin to appear? A course of antibiotics at the earliest signs of infection, with justifiable risk of exposure to make such diagnosis plausible, can forestall much future suffering and aggravation of mild symptoms. The benefits far outweigh risks in this question.
13. One picture is worth a thousand words! If you are fortunate enough to develop a rash -- PHOTOGRAPH IT. It may later prove to be one of the most important pieces of proof you have to convince your doctor that it is Lyme disease causing your symptoms.

If you would like to add to this list, please write to us at: PO Box 82, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York 10533.