

'Tis The Season For Lyme Disease

WHAT'S AT STAKE

For most people, the risk of Lyme disease is fairly low. Those that work outdoors, however, should be aware of the risk and what to do about it. Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is often carried by deer, mice, squirrels, birds and other small animals. It is transferred to humans through ticks who have first fed on the infected animal. Lyme disease was named after Lyme, Connecticut, the town where the first cases were diagnosed during the 1970s.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Although Lyme disease is rarely fatal, there are many long term health problems. Early recognition and diagnosis are important. The first sign of infection includes a circular rash from three to 30 days after the tick bite. This rash can be accompanied by fatigue, fever, chills, muscle and joint pain and swollen lymph nodes. If medical attention is not sought then the disease can progress to the second stage. This can last several months and symptoms include migraine, weakness, chronic skin rashes, abnormal heartbeat and extreme fatigue. If the disease continues to progress into the third stage it is much more difficult to treat. Patients can experience dizziness, numbness, chronic arthritis and even paralysis. If caught in the first two stages then Lyme disease can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

EXAMPLE

Two young children are sent to spend 2 weeks in the summer with their grandparents in Minnesota. The grandparent's home backs up to a wooded area where the kids have always liked to play. One child received a tick bite while playing outside. Her grandfather removed it by gripping the tick's head and mouth parts with tweezers and slowly retracting it from the skin. The child felt fine but when she returned home found a circular ring on her leg. Her mother took her to the doctor who correctly diagnosed it as Lyme disease when the mother explained she had suffered a tick bite.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Tick habitats can be reduced by removing leaves, tall grass and brush from around work sites. Other precautions include:

- Wear clothing that covers exposed skin, such as long sleeved shirts, pants tucked into boots or socks, hat, gloves, and neck scarf. Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks are more visible.
- Apply insect repellent that contains DEET to clothing and exposed skin.
- Carefully exam body and clothes after outdoor work and shower thoroughly.

If you do find a tick attached to your skin:

- Use tweezers to grasp its head and mouth as closely to the skin as possible and carefully remove it without twisting, rotating or crushing the insect.
- It's a good idea to save the tick in a vile or plastic bag just in case you feel yourself having symptoms of Lyme disease. This way doctors can help diagnose your illness and public health agencies can identify areas with higher risk of Lyme disease.

FINAL WORD

Lyme disease can become quite debilitating, but if you take proper precautions you can avoid the illness or at the very least detect it early enough to effectively treat it.

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Job Name: _____ Date: _____

Questions:

1. There are long term health problems associated with Lyme disease.
True False
2. Abnormal heartbeat and extreme fatigue often occur in the second phase of Lyme disease.
True False
3. Which of these is often the first sign of Lyme disease infection?
 - a. Fever
 - b. Shortness of breath
 - c. Circular rash
 - d. Dizziness and/or nausea
4. Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and is often carried by _____.
5. Lyme disease was first identified in Connecticut in the 1970s.
True False

Meeting Attended By:

Please print name here.

Initial here.

Please print name here.	Initial here.

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____