

Lyme's Disease

Lyme's disease is a bacterial infection that can be spread to humans by infected ticks. It is usually easier to treat when diagnosed early.

Symptoms of Lyme disease

A circular or oval shape rash around a tick bite can be an early symptom of Lyme's disease in some people.

The rash can appear up to 3 months after being bitten by an infected tick, but usually appears within 1 to 4 weeks. It can last for several weeks.

The rash can have a darker or lighter area in the centre and might gradually spread. It's not usually hot or itchy.

The rash may be flat, or slightly raised, and look pink, red, or purple when it appears on white skin. It can be harder to see the rash on brown and black skin and it may look like a bruise.



The rash may look like a bullseye on a dartboard.



Sometimes the edges of the rash may feel slightly raised.

Some people also get flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after they were bitten by an infected tick, such as:

- a high temperature, or feeling hot and shivery
- headache
- muscle and joint pain
- tiredness and loss of energy

The chance of getting Lyme disease

Not all ticks in England carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

But it's still important to be aware of ticks and to safely remove them as soon as possible, just in case.

Ticks that may cause Lyme disease are found all over the UK, but high-risk places include grassy and wooded areas in southern and northern England and the Scottish Highlands.

To remove a tick safely:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers or a tick-removal tool. You can buy these from some pharmacies, vets, and pet shops.
2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
3. Slowly pull upwards, taking care not to squeeze or crush the tick. Dispose of it when you have removed it.
4. Clean the bite with antiseptic or soap and water.

The chance of getting ill is low. You do not need to do anything else unless you notice a rash or become unwell.

When to see a GP

- you've been bitten by a tick or visited an area in the past 3 months where infected ticks could be.

and you have:

- flu-like symptoms – such as feeling hot and shivery, headaches, aching muscles or feeling sick, or
- a round or oval shape rash

Tell them if you have recently been in forests or grassy areas.

How to avoid tick bites

To reduce the chance of being bitten:

- cover your skin while walking outdoors and tuck your trousers into your socks.
- use insect repellent on your clothes and skin – products containing DEET are best.
- wear light-coloured clothing so ticks are easier to see and brush off.

Ongoing symptoms of Lyme disease

A few people who are diagnosed and treated for Lyme disease continue to have symptoms, like tiredness, aches, and loss of energy, that can last for years.

These symptoms are often compared to fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome.

It's not clear why this happens to some people and not others. This means there's also no agreed treatment.

Speak to a doctor if your symptoms come back, or do not improve, after treatment with antibiotics.

The doctor may be able to offer you further support if needed, such as:

- referral for a care needs assessment.

- telling your employer, school, or higher education institution that you require a gradual return to activities.
- communicating with children and families' social care.