Signs and Symptoms of Lyme Disease

- Symptoms usually start a few days to several weeks after being bitten.
- The first sign is often a pink or red rash (erythema migrans) around the site of the bite which usually appears within 3-30 days. It can gradually spread to form a large circle or patch up to 50-75 centimetres (20-30 inches) diameter if left untreated. The rash can also occur away from the bite site.
- It is not usually raised, itchy or painful and clears up rapidly with antibiotic treatment.
- The rash can sometimes be faint, and therefore missed on dark skin. It may also appear as a dark bruise on dark skin rather than the classical description.
- Rashes appearing within a few hours of a tick bite are **not** caused by Lyme disease, but could be allergic reactions or infections from common skin organisms.

 Flu-like symptoms may occur, including headaches, chills, tiredness, muscle pains, joint aches and fever. In the early stages these symptoms may be very mild, eg slight shivers at the back of

the neck; without treatment, they could last several weeks.

• More serious complications sometimes develop weeks or months after an infected bite in patients who did not receive early treatment. These include: facial palsy; pain, tingling or loss of sensation in the arms, legs or trunk; and joint pains. Other complications include fatigue and cardiac (heart) problems.

Treatment

Early treatment with recommended antibiotics is highly effective and should prevent complications developing. Longstanding infection

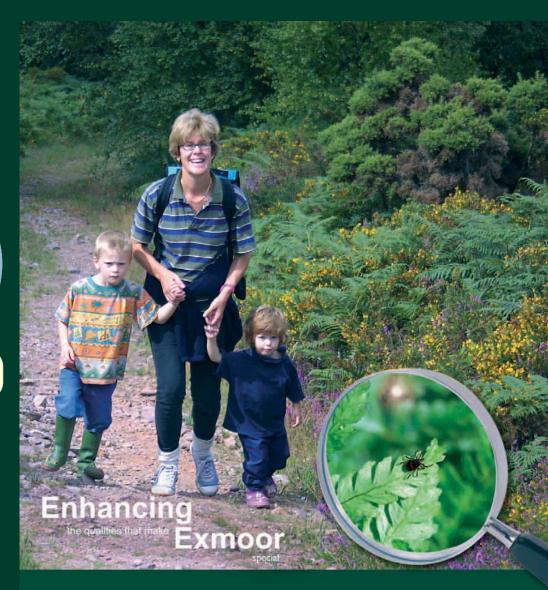
may require longer courses or intravenous antibiotics, so early recognition and treatment is important.

More information:

- European Union Concerted Action on Lyme Borreliosis (EUCALB): www.vie.dis.strath.ac.uk/vie/LymeEU/leaflet.htm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/index.htm
- Health Protection Agency: www.hpa.org.uk



Tick Bites and Lyme Disease



Typical early symptom of Lyme disease:

gradually spreading pink rash (erythema migrans) around the site of bite

(photo: 7 days after bite)

Lyme disease, also called Lyme borreliosis, is an illness caused by the bacterium Borrelia burgdorferi, which lives in the gut of some ticks. Most ticks do not carry the bacteria, but infection could be passed on to people bitten by infected ticks. To be safe you should assume that any tick bite is potentially infectious. Infected ticks are found in many parts of the country, including Exmoor.

What to look for

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures found in grassy or wooded areas. They attach themselves to passing animals (small and large domestic and wild animals, depending on the particular stage of the tick's lifecycle) and people, and then actively crawl about until they find a suitable site; they then latch onto the skin and can hang for 3-5 days.

Adult on thumbnail
- actual size

Deer Tick (Ixodes ricinus)

Engorged after feec

The peak periods for ticks are in late spring and early summer May - July) and to a lesser extent in the autumn (September - October). However there is a risk of tick bites at all times of the year if the weather is mild.

Prevention is Best

When in grassy, brushy or woodland areas:

- Keep your skin covered.
- Wear trousers rather than shorts or a skirt.
- Tuck your trouser bottoms into socks, and wear shoes or boots rather than sandals.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, with the cuffs fastened.

These precautions will help keep ticks on the outside of your clothes, where they can be spotted and picked off.

Consider using appropriate insect repellents over your clothing and on exposed skin.

Examine yourself and your children for ticks every three to four hours and at the end of the day. Brush off clothing before going indoors and check that pets do not bring ticks into the home on the fur. Check your skin thoroughly for any attached ticks after returning from a tick-infested area, paying particular attention to skin-fold areas such as the armpits, back of knee and groin and also the scalp, especially in young children.

If you have been bitten...

Don't worry. Remove the tick as soon as possible Even if the tick is carrying the infection, transmission of

Borrelia burgdorferi usually does not occur until the tick has been in place for approximately 36-48 hours, so early removal is a very effective prevention measure.

 Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, using fine tweezers or finger nails, and pull firmly and steadily without jerking or twisting. Don't rush.

 Try not to squeeze or crush the tick's body. Sometimes, tick mouth parts can break off from the body and remain in the skin. This is unlikely to increase the risk of Lyme disease, but common skin organisms could cause infection.

Apply a skin disinfectant once the tick has been removed.

 Specially designed tick extractors are available from veterinary practices and pet shops. They are inexpensive and particularly useful for people who are likely to have frequent tick exposure.

 Never apply heat, e.g. lighted cigarette ends or match heads, to attached ticks.

> Do not use chemicals such as alcohol, nail polish remover, petroleum jelly or aromatic oils to ticks prior to removal.

> > Check for redness around the site of the bite.

If you are concerned in any way or become unwell, see your doctor as soon as possible and discuss Lyme Disease.

Remove any attached ticks as soon as you can.

Use veterinary tick and flea repellents or tick collars on pets.



