



What is Lyme disease?

- Lyme disease is a rare disease of humans and animals. It is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is usually transmitted by ticks.

How does a person get Lyme disease?

- If bitten by tick infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, a person can get Lyme disease.
- Currently the risk for Lyme disease in Saskatchewan is low, but not zero. The great majority of ticks in Saskatchewan are the American dog tick, sometimes called “wood ticks”. This tick species does not carry the agent responsible for causing Lyme disease.
- Another kind of tick is the blacklegged tick or “deer tick” and is occasionally found in the province. They are most likely carried by migrating birds and a small number of these may be infected with the agent that causes Lyme disease.
- Blacklegged ticks are active from when the temperature starts to warm to 4°C through to freeze-up and all can bite humans and other animals.
- There have been occasional sporadic cases of Lyme disease reported in Saskatchewan. Some of these are related to travel, however the most recent case may have been acquired in Saskatchewan.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Lyme disease symptoms usually occur in three stages, although not all patients have all symptoms.
- The first sign of infection is usually a circular rash called *erythema migrans*. This rash occurs in about 70-80% of infected people. It begins at the site of the tick bite.
- Other common symptoms fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes.

- If untreated there can be central and peripheral nervous system disorders, multiple skin rashes, arthritis, heart palpitations, extreme fatigue and general weakness.
- People rarely die from Lyme disease.

What should a person do if they think they have Lyme disease?

- If you develop symptoms suggestive of Lyme disease after a tick bite be sure to consult your primary care provider.

How is Lyme disease prevented?

- Ticks are found in tall grass, brush or wooded areas throughout Southern Saskatchewan.
- When in areas that have ticks:
 - o Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and closed-toe footwear.
 - o Tuck pants into socks to prevent ticks from crawling up into your pant leg.
 - o Wear light-colored clothing (ticks are seen best on light fabric).
 - o Use insect repellent (with DEET or Icaridin) as per the instruction on the label.
 - o Try and stay on well-trodden paths.
- At night or when returning from outdoors:
 - o Remove clothes and do a ‘tick’ check. Some ticks are quite small – the size of a pin-head or freckle.
 - o Regularly check children and pets after they have been outside in risk areas.
 - o If a tick is found you should remove the tick with fine-tipped tweezers and save the tick in a double freezer bag or pill bottle with a piece of moist (not wet) paper towel. Place the tick in the refrigerator so that if symptoms develop the tick can then be sent for testing.

For more information, contact your Public Health Nurse, Doctor, Primary Care Nurse, or HealthLine at 811.