What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. A tick picks up the bacteria from an animal such as a mouse or bird and then passes it on to the next animal it feeds on, which could be you.

What happens if you get Lyme disease?

Symptoms start on average 10 days after the tick bite. Some people get a circular red rash (see photo below) that usually spreads out from the bite. Later, you might feel ill with:

- headaches
- feeling very tired
- fevers or sweats
- pains in muscles or joints
- numbness or tingling
- facial palsy (weakness)

Lyme disease can be mild, but it can also be very serious. Lyme disease should always be treated with antibiotics.



Some domestic animals can get Lyme disease, but it seems not to affect the wild animals that carry it.

Be smart and be aware!

- Keep your arms and legs covered when walking in woodland and similar places.
- Insect repellents containing chemicals called DEET or Picaridine will help keep ticks away.
- Check for ticks regularly when you are out, brush off clothing and check pets and flowers etc. before going inside. Check yourself carefully afterwards.
- If you find a tick attached, remove it quickly.

FACT: ticks can carry other diseases as well. In the UK these include Anaplasma, Babesia and Rickettsia. Other diseases can be contracted from ticks in other countries.

Further Information

You can contact us for feedback on our leaflets or references for the information provided - see our website.

www.LymeDiseaseAction.org.uk

Leaflets are also available from:

Lyme Disease Action,
PO Box 235, Penryn, Cornwall,
TR10 8WZ, UK

Including a donation will help us in our work for people affected by Lyme disease.

Please don't bin this leaflet - pass it on.

Disclaimer: Lyme Disease Action publications are not a substitute for professional medical advice and are intended as general information only. If you have or suspect you may have Lyme disease you should consult a doctor.

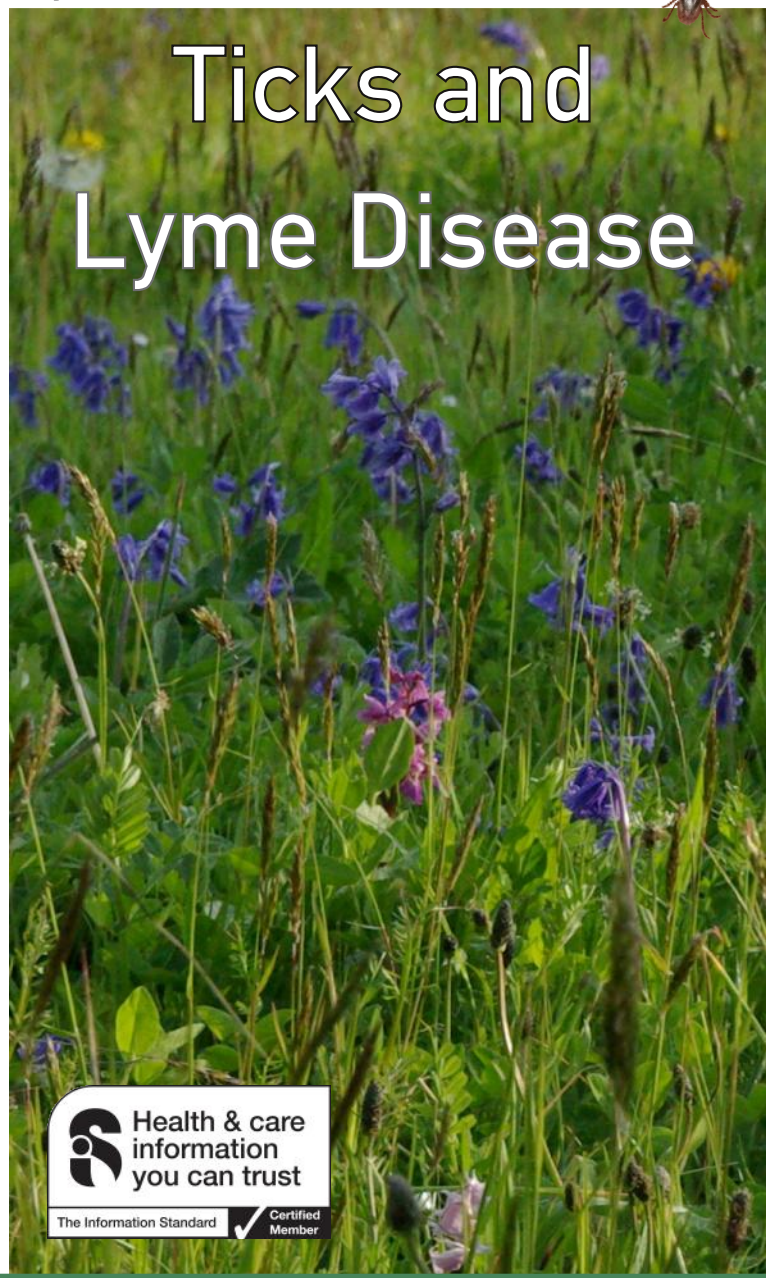
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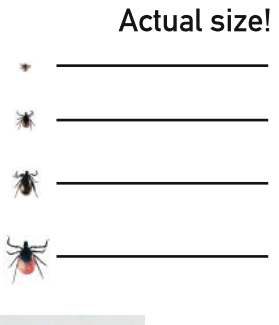
Ticks and Lyme Disease



Health & care information you can trust
The Information Standard Certified Member

What are ticks?

Ticks have eight legs (apart from the larvae, which have six), so they are not insects, but are arachnids, and are related to spiders, mites and scorpions. They go through four stages in their life cycle - egg, larva, nymph, then adult.





This is a slightly enlarged photo of an adult female tick, which is about the size of a pea. It has fed so its body has stretched and is full of blood.

Where are ticks found?

The native UK ticks tend to live in places with damp vegetation and lots of small animals and birds they can feed on.

Ticks can be found in woodland, moors, and even parks and gardens all over the UK. The Brown Dog Tick, recently imported from Europe, can survive in houses.

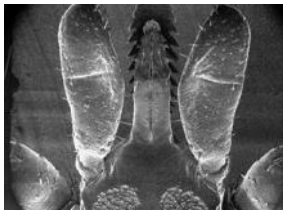






So how does a tick feed?

To grow from one stage to the next, the tick has to feed. It climbs a leaf or stalk, then waits for an animal or person to brush past. The tick has hooks on its front legs so that it can hang on to fur, clothing or skin. It then searches on the host for a suitable place to feed. The tick's mouth is like a hollow needle - called a hypostome. This enables the tick to stab through the skin and slowly feed on blood.



This is a highly magnified photograph of a tick's mouthparts, showing the barbed hypostome in the middle. The barbs help the tick to stay firmly attached.

If left undisturbed, the tick will stay attached for several days. Infections can be passed to you during this time. When it has finished feeding it drops off, ready to change to the next stage in its life cycle.

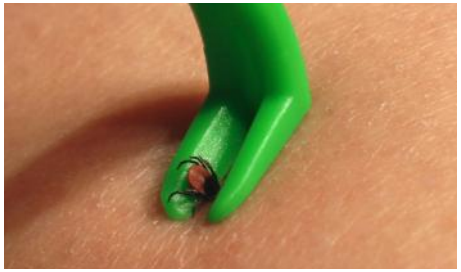


This photograph shows a nymph tick attached to someone's skin. Note how small it is compared to the fingernail.

How do you remove a tick?

The best way to remove a tick is to use a simple tick remover which hooks underneath the tick. Some, like the one shown, are made to be twisted as you pull to help break the grip.

Tick removers can be bought from our website or from vets and pharmacies.



If you don't have a tick remover, tie a loop of thread around the tick as close to your skin as possible and pull firmly upwards without twisting. Try not to damage the tick.

- DO NOT try to pull a tick out with your fingers! You might squeeze the contents of the tick into your body, which is more likely to make you ill.
- DO NOT try to burn the tick or cover it with vaseline or any other creams or chemicals.
- DO NOT scrape or cut the tick: remove it whole.
- DO disinfect the area around the bite using antiseptic cream, after you remove the tick.

Wrap tick in tape and dispose of, or send it to www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme

What if I have been bitten?

Don't panic! Not all ticks carry diseases, so you might not get ill. Just remove the tick as described above.

Lyme disease can be serious, so if you get a rash or you feel ill in the first six weeks or so after a tick bite, see a doctor straight away.