

# Lyme Disease

## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by bacteria that can spread to humans through the bite of an infected tick.

Not all ticks carry Lyme disease. In Ontario, the tick that is known to transmit Lyme disease is the Blacklegged (Deer) tick.

## Where are Blacklegged Ticks in Ontario?

In Ontario, there are [risk areas](#) for encountering a Blacklegged tick throughout the province. In Lambton County, Pinery Provincial park and the 20km area surrounding it in Lambton Shores has been identified as a **risk area**.

## Symptoms of Lyme disease

Not all tick bites will result in disease and the symptoms and health effects caused by Lyme disease can vary for each person. A common symptom is a red bull's-eye rash that appears at the site of the tick bite between 3 and 30 days after the bite (average 10 days).

Flu-like symptoms can also develop, such as:

- Muscle and joint pain
- Headache
- Fever
- Fatigue

The later stages of Lyme disease can include:

- Migraines
- Weakness
- Extreme joint pain
- Abnormal heartbeat
- Dizziness

These symptoms can occur weeks, months or even years after the initial symptoms have cleared.

***If you have been bitten by a blacklegged tick from a risk area and it has been attached for at least 24 hours, contact your doctor immediately.***

## Treatment

**Prophylactic:** If you are bitten by an identified black legged tick from a **risk area**, and it has been attached and feeding for more than 24 hours, you should consult your doctor for the possibility of prophylactic treatment.

If unable to get prophylactic treatment, or if bitten by a blacklegged tick outside of a high-risk area, monitor closely for symptoms. If detected early, Lyme disease can usually be treated with antibiotics.

Lyme disease that goes undetected can develop into a serious, chronic infection that is more difficult to treat.

## Ticks

Ticks are very small. Ticks must feed on blood from an animal or person to live. They feed by inserting their mouth into the skin of a person or animal.

Not all ticks carry Lyme disease. The American dog tick, which is the most common tick found in Lambton County, does not carry Lyme disease. The blacklegged tick, which is commonly in Pinery Provincial Park and surrounding area, can spread the Lyme disease bacteria to humans.

## Preventing tick bites

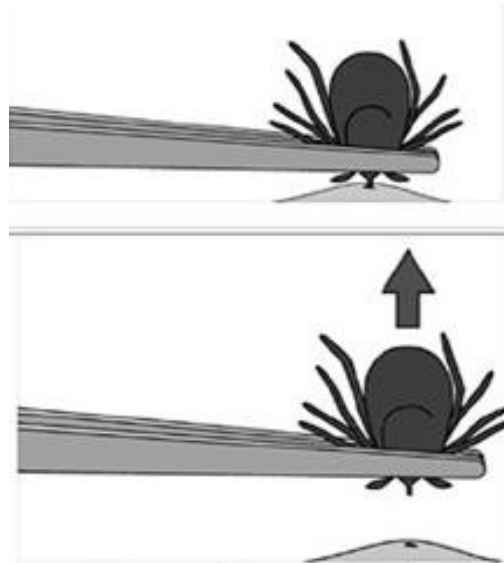
When entering areas with tall grass, bushes and wooded areas where ticks live, take the following precautions:

- When walking outdoors, stick to the trails and avoid direct contact with plant growth.
- Wear light-coloured clothing. It makes ticks easier to spot.
- Wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, socks, closed-toed shoes and a hat. Tuck your shirt in your pants and pants in your socks.
- Adults and children 12 years of age and older should apply an insect repellent that contains 20%-30% DEET\* to clothing or skin. Avoid your eyes and mouth area. For infants younger than 6 months old, do NOT use an insect repellent containing DEET. Instead, use a mosquito net when babies are outdoors in a crib or stroller.
- Put a tick and flea collar on your pet. Check them every so often to see if they have ticks. Pets can bring ticks inside your house.
- Do a **tick check** on yourself, your family and your pets after being outdoors. Pay extra attention to scalp, groin and armpits. Infected ticks are unlikely to transmit Lyme disease to the host if removed quickly, so early detection is very important.

## Removing ticks

Remove any ticks that you find on the skin or clothing promptly. Ticks are most likely to spread the bacteria after being attached to your skin and feeding for more than 24 hours.

- NEVER use a match, heat or chemicals to remove a tick.
- Do not kill the tick before it is removed.
- Remove the tick using tweezers. Grab the tick's head as close to the skin as possible, pulling it straight out with steady pressure. Do not twist the tick or it may break off in the skin.
- Clean and disinfect the bite area.



(Image courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## Submitting ticks for identification

Save the tick alive in a jar, screw-top bottle, or a doubled zip-lock bag. Bring it to Lambton Public Health (160 Exmouth Street, Point Edward) for identification during normal business hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Alternatively, clear images of ticks can be submitted online through [Lambtonpublichealth.ca](http://Lambtonpublichealth.ca) or [etick.ca](http://etick.ca)

Please note: only Blacklegged ticks found on human related cases will be submitted for identification. **There is no testing for Lyme disease available at Lambton Public Health.**

For more information call 519-383-8331 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.