



Dear Friend,

Summer is upon us! As we spend more time outside enjoying the nice weather, we must also be vigilant about the risks of ticks. Tick bites can cause Lyme disease and other infections, threatening the health of our family.

Enclosed are some helpful tips about how to protect yourself and your family. Lyme disease is treatable, but it's important to know how to prevent it and what steps to take if you find a tick bite. For more information visit [www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme).

If you have any questions, I want to hear from you. Please call me, send me an e-mail, or visit my website at any time.

Wishing you a safe and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara  
Representing areas of Albany, Montgomery and Schenectady Counties

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# LYME DISEASE

## What you need to know



Courtesy of  
Assemblyman  
Angelo Santabarbara

# The facts about Lyme disease

## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that can produce skin, arthritic, neurological and even cardiac symptoms. The bacteria that causes Lyme disease is transmitted by the bite of an infected deer tick (pictured below and on the front). The tick must usually be attached for 36 to 48 hours for the bacteria to spread. Ticks can also transmit other diseases, including tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Once on the skin, the tick generally finds a protected area, including inside and behind the ears, along the hairline, on the back of the neck, in the armpits, on the groin, on the legs, behind the knees or between the toes.

## What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

Symptoms and their severity vary. Early symptoms may be mild and easily overlooked. Symptoms usually appear 3 to 30 days after the bite of an infected tick. The first symptom is usually a slowly expanding red "bull's-eye" rash in excess of 2 inches at the site of the tick bite. Symptoms may be flu-like, including chills, fever, fatigue, headache, neck stiffness, jaw discomfort, pain or stiffness in muscles or joints. If left untreated, Lyme disease can progress to more serious stages, affecting the heart, liver or central nervous system.



## Is Lyme disease treatable?

Studies have shown that most cases of Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. The earlier treatment begins, the easier it is to prevent the long-term effects of the disease. Contact your doctor at the first sign of Lyme disease.

## Minimizing your risk:

- When in wooded or grassy areas, wear light-colored long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. This will help you spot ticks. Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants. Avoid heavy vegetation – stay on well-traveled paths.
- Keep your lawn mowed, and avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.
- Stack woodpiles away from your house, remove leaf litter and clear brush around your house.
- Once indoors, do a thorough check of your clothes and your entire body, paying particular attention to the backs of knees, behind ears, the scalp and back. Take a bath or shower and put clothes in dryer for 10 minutes.
- Place play equipment in sunny dry areas of the yard, away from woods.
- Check your children and pets for attached or crawling ticks.
- Consider using EPA-registered insect repellents to reduce tick bites. Follow label instructions carefully and use sparingly.
- Ask your veterinarian which pet products reduce tick exposure. Dogs are very susceptible to tick bites.



The actual size of an unengorged adult tick is about the size of a sesame seed. 

## Separating fact from fiction

**Myth:** Ticks fly, jump or drop from trees.

**Fact:** Ticks live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs, about 18-24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods and around stone walls. They can be active any time the temperature is above freezing. Deer ticks cannot jump or fly and only get on humans and animals by direct contact.

**Myth:** Burning, twisting or rotating the tick are effective removal techniques.

**Fact:** Trying to burn or "unscrew" a tick only increases the chance of becoming infected with Lyme disease. The best way to remove a tick is with tweezers or a specialized tick-removal tool. Disinfect the bite site and wash your hands. If a tick has already embedded itself in the skin, it needs to be taken care of immediately.

**Myth:** Lyme disease is rare.

**Fact:** Over 95,000 cases of Lyme disease have been confirmed in New York State since 1986. Lyme disease is a serious health threat. But with the proper precautions, you can greatly reduce your risk of contraction.

**Myth:** A past Lyme disease infection makes a person immune.

**Fact:** Lyme disease is a bacterial infection. Even if successfully treated, a person may become re-infected if bitten later by another infected tick.