



Lyme disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread through the bite of one of several types of ticks



What are ticks, and how to identify them

Ticks are small creatures related to spiders. Undeveloped ticks are about the size of a poppy seed, while adult ticks look more like tiny spiders. They are most active and from April to October, and don't jump or fly, but wait for an animal or person to brush past to climb on. Then ticks bite to attach to the skin and start to feed on the blood.



Where can you find them, and how to avoid getting bitten

Ticks can survive in lots of different places, but prefer dense vegetation or long grass (including some urban parks and gardens). Make sure you check for ticks when you have been out in nature, especially places such as arm pits, the back of your knee, and hair lines, and remove any ticks as soon as possible. Try and wear light-coloured clothing, so any ticks are easier to spot, and use insect repellents. Also make sure to avoid dense vegetation and stick to paths where possible.



Main health risks

Ticks can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which can cause a rash, tiredness, and muscle and joint pain. More serious symptoms can develop if left untreated, such as nerve damage and arthritis. Lyme disease can be treated with a course of antibiotics at any stage, but it is important to catch it early.



What to do if you're bitten

- Use a tick removal tool to remove the entire tick. Slide the tool under the tick, twirl the tool in either direction and gently pull away.
- Only use tweezers if you do not have a tick removal tool. Grab the tick as closely to the skin as possible, then pull slowly upward to remove it.
- Contact your GP if you start feeling unwell, and tell them you have been bitten by a tick.

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Tick size relative to a 1p coin

