

# TICK INFORMATION

## What is a tick?

A tick is a small, blood-sucking mite. Normally it lives on blood from larger animals, like deer, but it may also attach itself to humans.

The tick sits on tall grass and trees, waiting for a possible 'host' to walk by. If a tick attaches itself to someone, it will typically find its way to a warm, moist and dark place on the body (like the crotch or the armpit).

It will then insert a probe into the skin and begin sucking blood. In most cases the tick will leave after a while, or the host will get rid of it without any harm having been done. But, occasionally, the tick carries a small [bacterium](#) called *Borrelia burgdorferi* in its stomach. This is what causes [Lyme disease](#). The further under the skin it gets, the greater the risk of catching the disease.

## Why is it important to remove a tick?

A tick on the body doesn't usually cause any pain, but it is still important to get rid of it because of the risk of Lyme disease. Every year about 300-500 cases are reported.

## How to remove the tick

The tick presses its head into the skin so it is important to try and remove all of it: remnants in the skin could cause infection.

- Seize the tick with a pair of tweezers as close to the head as possible. Take care not to pull it apart. Pull slowly and consistently until it lets go. Don't pull too hard.
- If the above method fails, tie a cotton thread around the tick as close to the head as possible and pull slowly until it lets go.
- Do not attempt to remove the tick through burning or chemicals - this may cause more harm than good.

## What to do if the head gets stuck

If the tick is accidentally pulled apart and the head stays in the skin, there is a risk of being infected with other microscopic organisms. This kind of infection has nothing to do with Lyme disease, but can still be dangerous and unpleasant. See a doctor if infection occurs.

## Do I need an antibiotic if I have been bitten by a tick?

If you have been bitten by a tick and have removed it, the risk of getting Lyme disease is so small that there is no reason to use an antibiotic.

It is, however, important to watch out for symptoms that may indicate Lyme disease, especially a red spot close to the tick bite. The spot gradually gets bigger and, eventually, a pale area will appear in the middle. This is often accompanied by [headache](#) and fever, which will usually appear between 3 and 30 days after the bite. If this happens, see a doctor immediately.

# Lyme disease

## What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection that derives from a [tick bite](#). The disease has a variety of symptoms, including changes affecting the skin, heart, joints and nervous system. It is also known as borrelia or borreliosis.



Borrelia (Lyme disease) is caused by an infection resulting from a tick bite. The tick (shown above) often buries its head into the skin.

## What causes Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is caused by an infection from a micro-organism (*Borrelia burghdorferi*), itself transmitted by a bite from the wood tick, a blood-sucking parasite which normally lives on deer.

The wood tick is found in many areas, particularly in forests where deer are common. A tick will settle anywhere on a human body, but prefers warm, moist and dark places like the crotch or armpits.

When the tick has found a suitable place on the body, it sticks in its probe to draw up blood, exposing the host to the risk of infection.

## What does Lyme disease feel like?

Simply seeing a tick somewhere on your body does not mean that you have contracted Lyme disease. Unfortunately, not everyone knows when they have been bitten, so consult your GP if you detect the following symptoms.

- A red spot around the location of the tick's bite. The spot will gradually grow bigger, often with a pale area in the middle. This symptom is called erythema migrans.
- Erythema migrans can also appear at other places on the body where the tick has not bitten. Some people get many red spots.
- Usually one to four weeks will pass between the bite and when erythema migrans appears.

Some patients with Lyme disease feel like they have caught [influenza](#) - the symptoms may be:

- Drowsiness
- [headaches](#)
- mild fever
- joint and muscle pains
- swollen lymph glands.