



Lyme Disease

In California the western black-legged tick transmits bacteria that cause Lyme disease. This type of tick, found in almost all of California, is most common in the coastal regions and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. Over the past ten years, more than 1,000 cases of Lyme disease have been reported in California. However, it is believed that many more cases remain undiagnosed.

Only nymphs and adult female ticks can transmit Lyme disease to humans. Nymphs, which are extremely tiny, are found in cool, moist environments like leaf litter or logs, tree trunks or fallen branches. Adults are found on the tips of grasses and shrubs, often along trails.

Prevention

To prevent Lyme disease, wear a long-sleeved shirt, and tuck your shirt into your pants and your pants into boots or socks. Apply a tick repellent to clothing. Stay on trails and avoid contact with bushes or grasses along trails where ticks are common. Regularly examine yourself, your children and pets for ticks and remove them promptly. Check the hairline, behind the earlobe, under the arms and breasts, at the beltline, groin and behind the knees.



Shown larger than actual size

Removing an Attached Tick

Prompt removal can prevent the transmission of infection. Do not use bare hands; instead use tweezers (or tissue) to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick straight out, using a firm, steady motion—do not jerk the tick. Wash your hands and the bite site with soap and water after the tick is removed, and apply an antiseptic to the bite. A ring of red, expanding rash around the bite may appear. If redness or pain develops at the tick bite site, consult your doctor.

Symptoms of Lyme Disease

Symptoms vary and diagnosis can be difficult. Lyme disease can start as a mild flu-like illness and then develop into severe chronic health problems. The early stages of the disease can include a red, expanding skin rash, chills and fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, muscle and joint pain, weakness of some facial muscles and heart irregularities.

These symptoms can disappear without treatment, but the infection may still be present. If early Lyme disease symptoms are not recognized and treated properly, the disease may progress and be more difficult to treat.

See your doctor immediately if you develop any of the symptoms listed above after finding a tick attached to your skin or after being in an area where ticks are known to occur.

For more information on Lyme disease, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenu/sub_lyme.htm.