

## Things You Should Know about Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is an infection that is transmitted through the bite of a tick infected with a bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Ticks typically get the bacterium by biting infected animals, like deer and mice. Most people who get tick bites do not get Lyme disease. Not all ticks are infected, and the risk for contracting the disease increases the longer the tick is attached to the body.

### Symptoms: Early Stage

Within one to four weeks of being bitten by an infected tick, most people will experience some symptoms of Lyme disease. A circular, expanding rash at the site of the bite develops in about 70-80% of cases. Some people report flu-like symptoms at this stage, including fever, chills, headaches, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, joint pain, and muscle aches.

### Symptoms: As the Infection Spreads

If the disease is not detected and treated in its early stages, it can extend to more areas of the body, affecting the joints, heart, and nervous system (after several weeks to months after the initial bite). Additional rashes may occur, and there may be intermittent periods of pain and weakness in the arms or legs. Facial-muscle paralysis (Bell's palsy), headaches, and poor memory are other symptoms at this stage, along with a rapid heartbeat and some loss of control of facial muscles.

### Symptoms: Late-Stage Disease

This is the most serious stage of the disease, when treatment was either unsuccessful or never started (usually occurring many months after the initial bite). Joint inflammation (arthritis), typically in the knees, becomes apparent and may become chronic. The nervous system can develop abnormal sensation because of disease of peripheral nerves and confusion.

### Diagnosing Lyme Disease

Doctors can diagnose the disease through physical findings such as a "bull's-eye" rash along with a history of symptoms. But not everyone has the rash, and not everyone can recall being bitten. Special blood tests can be taken three to four weeks after suspected contact to confirm the diagnosis.

### Treating Lyme Disease

Most Lyme disease is curable with antibiotics, particularly when the infection is diagnosed and treated early. Later stages might require longer-term, intravenous antibiotics.

### How to Remove a Tick

Using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the part of the tick that's closest to your skin, grabbing the head and not the belly. Slowly pull the tick straight out without twisting it. Wash the bite site with soap and warm water.



### Do all ticks transmit Lyme disease?

No. In the northeastern and north-central U.S., the black-legged tick (or deer tick) transmits Lyme disease. In the Pacific coastal U.S., the disease is spread by the western black-legged tick. Other major tick species found in the U.S., including the lone star tick and the dog tick, have not been known to transmit the Lyme disease bacterium. But beware: Lyme disease has been reported in all 50 states, as well as in Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia, and South America.

You can't catch Lyme disease by being around an infected person. And although pets can become infected by a tick, they cannot transmit the disease to humans unless an infected tick falls off the animal and then bites a person. Insects such as mosquitoes, flies, or fleas cannot spread the disease to humans either. Only infected ticks have that honor.

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# Patient Testimonial

*She was my sounding board, when I needed her most...*

“My ConnectCare3 Nurse Navigator kept me grounded, especially after late nights spent Googling my condition; something I would never recommend to anyone dealing with a health issue. She provided me with credible research that confirmed I was headed down the right path.”

**--Donna Fowler  
Lehighton, PA**

In late December of 2013, I was involved in an automobile accident. I was initially taken to Lehigh Valley's Cedar Crest Hospital where I was told I had a sprained wrist, bruised sternum, sprained knee and a broken rib. After following up with my primary care physician, I completed occupational therapy but my sprained wrist had not improved. I then saw an orthopedic hand expert in Allentown, who diagnosed me with a fractured scaphoid (a bone in your wrist) and put me in a heavy cast for two months. During that time, I began to develop severe pain in my shoulder and bicep. The pain in my shoulder led me to a shoulder specialist who tried a cortisone shot and physical therapy to relieve my pain. Unfortunately for me, the shot and therapy did not help to relieve the pain.

I eventually had my heavy cast removed and replaced with a lightweight cast for two more months. Once the second cast was removed, my physician suggested surgery because my wrist had not healed properly. Following my surgery, I returned to my shoulder specialist because the pain in my shoulder had not gone away. I was so overwhelmed with my condition; I just didn't know what to do next. That is when I called ConnectCare3.

I had originally heard about ConnectCare3 at work during an educational presentation. My first impression though was that the services provided were reserved for patients with more serious issues like cancer. ConnectCare3 was always in the back of my mind, but it wasn't until my HR representative suggested that I give ConnectCare3 a call that it was back on my radar.

When I made my initial phone call to ConnectCare3, I was hesitant to tell my [long] story to a stranger, but the ConnectCare3 Patient Advocate who answered the phone was so comforting and willing to listen. I was assigned to an amazing Nurse Navigator who from that moment on was with me every step of the way. Having her there on the other end of line to listen and guide me was such a weight lifted off my shoulders.

My ConnectCare3 Nurse Navigator kept me grounded, especially after late nights spent Googling my condition; something I would never recommend to anyone dealing with a health issue. She provided me with credible research that confirmed I was headed down the right path. At this point in time, I had developed a frozen shoulder, wrist and thumb and I was starting to have pain in the other shoulder and thumb. Most likely due to how long I was in a cast and in the case of the other arm, from overuse. A frozen shoulder is a condition that is characterized by severe stiffness and pain in your shoulder joint. I then underwent a shoulder manipulation under anesthesia and had many more months of physical therapy.

My Nurse Navigator helped me find an excellent physician to consider as a second opinion. His recommendation included a second surgery for my wrist. I can happily report that I am currently in therapy and my condition is improving. Pending a driving evaluation, I hope to return to work in the upcoming months. It's hard to describe in words what ConnectCare3 gave to me. The connection you feel after making that first phone call is immeasurable and the care received is unlike any other. I can say now that I would not be where I am today without ConnectCare3.