

Lyme Disease

Inspect your child carefully each day. If you find a tick, grasp the tick with fine tweezers (or your fingers if you don't have any tweezers) as close to the skin surface as possible, pull straight up with a slow, steady force and avoid crushing the tick or slipping off the body. Ultimately you do not want to force any material from the tick into your skin. Clean the area of tick attachment with disinfectant, and wash your hands. If removal occurs within 24 hours of attachment, the risk of tick-borne infection is substantially reduced. Do not attempt to remove ticks using petroleum jelly, lit cigarettes or other home remedies because these methods may actually increase the chance of contracting a tick-borne disease. Make note of the date and location of the bite and which child was bitten for future reference. *We do not recommend treating preventatively with antibiotics or routinely doing any blood test.* The chance of being infected from a tick bite is very low, and infection in an otherwise healthy child is usually very mild and easily treatable.

What to Look For:

The early stages of Lyme disease are usually marked by one or more of the following symptoms 1 to 3 weeks following the bite of an infected deer tick:

- A red circular rash at the site of the bite that appears in the majority, but not all of the cases. (This is the only symptom in most children.)
- Fatigue, chills and fever, loss of appetite and general body aches
- Bell's palsy (facial paralysis which usually occurs on one side)
- Rarely, severe headache and stiff neck

Some symptoms and signs of Lyme disease may not appear until 1 to 6 months after the tick bite:

- Brief bouts of marked swelling with mild pain, redness and warmth, usually in one or more large joints, especially the knee.
- Rarely, irregularities of the heart rhythm also occur.

Sometimes the rash never forms, and the first and only sign of Lyme disease is arthritis. For some, nervous system problems are the only evidence of the disease.