

Ticks and Lyme disease



Lyme disease is an infection caused by a bacterium. It is spread by the bite of blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), also known as deer ticks. This tick can transmit other pathogens such as *Borrelia miyamotoi* (similar to Lyme disease).

The ticks are quite small (1 to 5mm long) when not engorged with blood. Ticks usually come in contact with people or animals by positioning themselves on tall grass and bushes. They may take several hours to find a suitable place on the host to feed. Most tick bites are painless and do not cause disease because most ticks are not infected.

How do ticks transmit Lyme disease?

- The risk of developing Lyme disease is low for individuals bitten by an infected tick.
- The risk of transmission is higher after 24 hours of attachment, because it takes some time for the bacterium to move from the tick's intestine to its salivary glands.
- One of the main ways of preventing the disease is to detect the tick and remove it quickly during this window of time.
- When a blacklegged tick infected with Lyme disease is quickly removed from the body, it is very unlikely to transmit the disease to its human host.

What are the symptoms?

- Early symptoms typically occur within one to two weeks, but they can also appear as early as three days or as long as one month after a tick bite.
- **See a doctor immediately** if you experience any of the following symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, fatigue AND skin rash, especially if it looks like a red bull's-eye (called erythema migrans).
- These rashes come in various shapes and sizes (see photo).
- A rash that looks like a red bull's-eye does not necessarily occur in all infected patients.

Ticks do not jump, but they can cling to you or your pet. The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to avoid tick bites.



How can you avoid ticks?

- Wear light-coloured clothing. This makes it easier to see and remove ticks from your clothes.
- Wear a hat, long pants, closed footwear, socks and a long-sleeved shirt.
- Tuck your sweater into your pants and your pant legs into your socks.
- Use an insect repellent that contains 30% or less DEET twice a day, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Apply insect repellent on your skin and the outside of your clothing. Avoid putting repellent on eyes, mouth, cuts and scratches.
- If you are in an area where blacklegged ticks are established, examine yourself thoroughly for ticks. It is important to do this every day.
- Pay special attention to areas such as the groin, scalp, navel, back of the knee, armpits and under your watch strap and elastic bands in underwear and other tight-fitting clothing. Use a mirror to examine your back or ask someone else to check for you.
- Examine your clothing and equipment (backpack, coat, etc.).
- Remove ticks from clothing by putting them in the dryer at high heat for 6 minutes.
- Take a shower or bath within two hours of spending time outdoors to remove unattached ticks.
- For additional information, please visit <https://canlyme.com/lyme-prevention/tick-id-removal/>

Mailing instructions:

Complete the submission form.

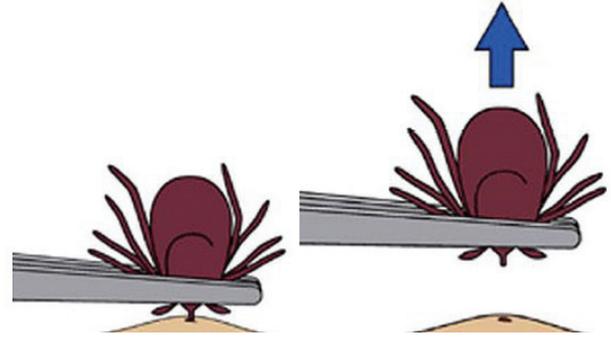
Place the form in an airtight bag (example: Ziploc®).

Put the form and the airtight bag containing the tick in a **padded envelope**.

Send it as soon as possible to:

GDG Environment, 430 rue Saint Laurent, Trois-Rivières, QC, G8T 6H3

What should I do if I find a tick and want to have it tested by GDG Environment?



- Remove it quickly to prevent infection, because the tick needs to be attached for more than 24 hours to transmit the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.
- Use fine-tipped tweezers to gently grasp the tick as close to your skin as possible. Pull it straight out, gently but firmly.
- Do not squeeze the tick, because this may cause the Lyme bacteria to be accidentally introduced into your body.
- **Do not put the tick in alcohol or on adhesive tape.**
- After removing the tick, place it in an airtight container, such as an empty pill bottle, and store it in the freezer until you are ready to ship it.
- Place the container in an airtight bag (example: Ziploc®).
- Carefully clean the bite area with soap and water or disinfect the wound with rubbing alcohol.
- Mail the specimen to us along with the completed form.