

## Simple Facts About Lyme Disease

About 90 percent of reported cases of Lyme disease occur in eight states in the Northeast, from Maryland to Massachusetts. New Jersey is among the states reporting the most cases.

Lyme disease is most commonly caused by a bite from a deer tick. The tick is infected with a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Deer ticks are tiny and attach to a person's skin to feed from human blood.

It is important to take precautions against Lyme disease when you are in an area with dense ground cover or woods.

To prevent Lyme disease:

- Avoid brush and leaf litter or tall grass when in the woods
- Wear socks, shoes and pants with the bottoms tucked into socks.
- Wear a shirt with a snug collar, long sleeves and cuffs. Tuck into trousers.
- Detect ticks easier by wearing light-colored clothing.
- Wash away unattached ticks by showering after an outing.
- Examine people and pets, keeping in mind that immature ticks are as small as the size of a pinhead.
- Consult a veterinarian for recommendations for appropriate tick control products for pets.

Ticks that have become imbedded must be removed with a pointed tweezer, getting as close to the skin as possible to remove the tick completely. The risk of infection increases if the tick is not removed properly.

Lyme disease presents as a flu-like illness with achy joints, muscle pain and headache. It is most often associated with an expanding red rash. Do not ignore these signs. Report them to your physician right away. Nearly all Lyme disease patients can be treated with antibiotics. Left untreated, Lyme disease may affect the heart, joints and nervous system.

For more information, please e-mail your request to: [healthdept@co.bergen.nj.us](mailto:healthdept@co.bergen.nj.us).