

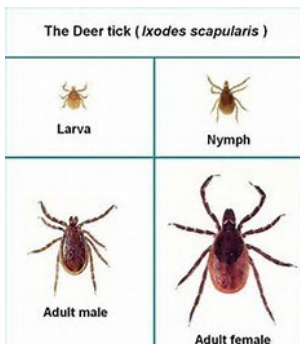
DEER TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

DEER TICKS (*Ixodes scapularis*) are the main vector of Lyme disease in North America. They can also transmit other less common diseases and parasites. Co-infections complicate Lyme symptoms, especially diagnosis and treatment. Ticks acquire Lyme disease microbes by feeding on infected mice and other small rodents.



PREVENTION OF DEER TICKS - Deer ticks are more active in warm weather. Wear long pants and tuck pants into socks. Wear light-colored clothing to help spot when ticks are present. Stay in the middle of hiking trails. Try not to disturb surrounding foliage off-trail through underbrush where ticks may reside or travel. Check for ticks often. Brush off visible ticks carefully. Inspect yourself and companions, especially hairy areas and beltline when you get home. Showering will NOT remove biting ticks but ticks on clothes are killed when subjected to 1/2 hour in a dryer.

IDENTIFICATION OF DEER TICKS - Deer ticks go through 4 life stages in their normal 2 year life cycle. In the **egg** stage clusters of female ticks can contain 6,500 larvae hatchlings. This **larvae** stage can last up to one year for deer ticks. In the larval stage of life deer ticks have 6 legs and are usually no bigger than a poppy seed. In the next life stage, the **nymph**, deer ticks have 8 legs. After 30-40 days the nymphs become **adults** and look for the last of three blood meals from deer, dogs, cats, humans or other mammals.



SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE - Typical symptoms of Lyme disease include flu-like symptoms, a circular rash at the bite zone that looks like a bull's eye, painful joints and severe fatigue. But these symptoms are not always presented. Only about 50% of people diagnosed with Lyme disease report seeing a rash.



CONSEQUENCES OF LYME DISEASE - Some of the disorders associated with Lyme disease include cardiac problems; joint, tendon, and muscle pain; numbness; memory loss; and severe fatigue. Only very rarely have there been reports of death associated with Lyme disease.

DEER TICK REMOVAL - Assemble a tick kit containing pointed tweezers, magnifying glass, a small vial (like a empty medicine container) and an antiseptic. Do NOT use a hot match head, nail polish or Vaseline on the tick. Grab the tick firmly by the head with the tweezers as close to the skin as possible. Avoid squeezing the tick's abdomen. Pull straight out. Do not twist. Save the tick in a small vial with a damp tissue or a blade of grass. Refrigerate until you check with your doctor. Clean the bite area by blotting with antiseptic. If tick mouth parts remain in your skin be sure to tell your doctor. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and see your physician as soon as possible. Once removed deer ticks can be tested for the presence of Lyme disease.

TREATMENTS FOR LYME DISEASE - See a doctor at the sudden onset of any combination of the above symptoms even without seeing a tick or a rash. Early antibiotic treatment is effective.

This flyer has been reviewed and approved by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.