

## What is Lyme disease?

- Lyme disease is caused by a corkscrew shaped bacteria called Borrelia
- Lyme disease can be transmitted via a tick bite
- Ticks can carry other infections such as Anaplasma and Babesia
- Ticks are arachnids and can be as small as a poppy seed
- Some doctors also believe that Lyme disease can be transmitted by insects such as mosquitoes, sand flies, fleas and horseflies (more research needs to be carried out on these methods of transmission). There is also some evidence to suggest that it may be possible for Lyme disease to be transmitted sexually, congenitally and via blood transfusions and organ donations. More research into these possibilities is desperately needed.



## Risk of Lyme Disease

- Infected ticks can be found all over the UK
- Infected ticks are found in woodland and parkland, but can also be found in urban parks and even gardens
- You can be infected in any month, but it is most likely in spring/summer
- The Big Tick project found ticks on 1 in 3 dogs

## Preventing Lyme Disease

- Prevention is crucial
- Wear insect repellent during outdoor activities and consider treating outdoor clothing with permethrin
- Avoid walking through long grass and stick to pathways
- Wear light coloured clothing and brush off any visible ticks
- Wear long sleeves and long trousers
- If you have to walk in long grass, tuck trousers into socks
- Shower and check for ticks when you get home
- Also use tick prevention on your pets and thoroughly check them for ticks after they have been outdoors

## **Removing a Tick**

- Never pull off a tick with your fingers, normal tweezers or any other tool not designed for the job
- Never smother the tick in oil or vaseline
- Carefully remove it using a tick remover or a pair of very fine tipped tweezers, ensuring all parts of the tick are removed
- If you save the tick, it can be tested for infections
- There is no minimum time a tick needs to be attached to pass an infection, however do remove it as soon as possible

## **Diagnosing Lyme Disease**

- Lyme disease can be hard to diagnose
- Tick bites are easily missed and are not normally itchy or painful
- Many people will not get the classic 'bull's-eye' rash
- Other symptoms to look out for are 'summer flu', headaches, fatigue, joint pain and behavioural changes
- A blood test can not rule out Lyme disease
- Less than 3% of GPs have taken the RCGP course on Lyme disease (as at Feb 2017)

## **Treating Lyme Disease**

- Early treatment is key
- Treatment should be started immediately if a 'bull's-eye' rash is present
- Your GP will be able to advise on the best antibiotics for you, however doxycycline is commonly prescribed to adults and amoxicillin to children
- The RCGP course states that antibiotics should be repeated until all symptoms cease
- The NHS does not normally recommend treating prophylactically unless pregnant or immunosuppressed