Ticks and Lyme Disease

For more information about Lyme disease, visit http://www.cdc.gov/Lyme

Children and Lyme disease

Although anyone can get Lyme disease, children spend a lot of time outdoors and are at particular risk.

Reasons to suspect that your child may have Lyme disease include:

- Your family lives in or has visited a region where Lyme disease is commonly found
- You know or suspect that your child has been exposed to ticks
- Your child is experiencing symptoms such as rash, fever, chills, fatigue, joint or muscle pain, or facial paralysis

Children sometimes experience joint pain as their first, and possibly only, symptom of Lyme disease. If you suspect that your child may have Lyme disease, seek care promptly.

What to expect from your child's appointment

If the doctor thinks that your child has Lyme disease based on symptoms and possible exposure, your child will most likely receive 2-4 weeks of antibiotics.

If your child's symptoms are not clear-cut, the doctor may decide to have your child's blood tested. Keep in mind that blood testing is more accurate the longer the child has been infected. A blood test for Lyme disease will may not appear positive until 2-3 weeks after infection. Therefore, a doctor may order a later, second test if the first test was negative.

Treatment of Lyme disease in children

- A typical treatment for children less than 8-years-old would include oral amoxicillin three times daily for 2-4 weeks. Children who are allergic to amoxicillin would most likely receive cefuroxime axetil twice daily instead.
- A typical treatment for children over 8-years-old would include doxycycline twice daily for 2-4 weeks. Children who are allergic to tetracyclines would receive amoxicillin or cefuroxime axetil instead.

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases
Division of Vector Borne Diseases | Bacterial Diseases Branch

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Facial paralysis.

Bull's eye rash on the back.

Arthritic knee.

Helping your child recover

Give your child the complete course of antibiotics as recommended. Make sure that they get plenty of rest so that they can recover. Joint pain may take longer to go away than other symptoms.

Some people wonder if there is a test to confirm that their child is cured. This is not currently possible because the immune system remembers an infection long after it has been cured. Blood tests can remain positive for months or years. Don't be alarmed. This doesn't mean that your child is still infected.

Most importantly, practice prevention against tick bites. Kids can get Lyme disease again if they are bitten by another infected tick.

Protect your family from Lyme disease

- Use insect repellent that contains 20 - 30% DEET. Follow the instructions on the packaging.
- Make children bathe or shower as soon as possible after they come indoors.
- Look for ticks on their bodies. Ticks can hide under the armpits, behind the knees, in the hair, and in the groin.
- Put clothes in the dryer on high heat for 60 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.

Additional information

1. http://www.cdc.gov/Lyme
2. The Clinical Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention of Lyme Disease, Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis, and Babesiosis: Clinical Practice Guidelines by the Infectious Diseases Society of America http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/43/9/1089.full
3. Tick Management Handbook (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven) http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/special_features/tickhandbook.pdf

The bite of a blacklegged tick can transmit the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.

For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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