

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vectorborne illness in the United States. It's an infection caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which can be transmitted to humans through infected tick bites. The blacklegged tick, or deer tick, spreads the disease in the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and north-central United States. The tick normally attaches to the human body in unseen areas such as the groin, armpits, and scalp. They are usually attached for 36-48 hours before transmitting the Lyme disease bacterium.

Once infected with the bacterium, there are three different stages the patient may go through, the early localized stage, early disseminated stage, and late disseminated stage. The early localized stage signs and symptoms include a red rash called erythema migrans or "bull's-eye" rash, fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes. If left untreated, the patient could develop into the early disseminated stage, where the infection may spread from the site of the tick bite to other parts of the body. Symptoms include additional erythema migrans lesions, facial or Bell's palsy, severe headaches and neck stiffness, pain and swelling in the large joints. Over time, the disease could become chronic, occurring months to years after the tick bite. Most chronic patients have periods of arthritis with severe joint pain, swelling, and neurological disorders.

For patients with Lyme disease, there aren't many treatment options. The early localized stage is treated with antibiotics. Patients prescribed with doxycycline, amoxicillin, or cefuroxime axetil, often recover fast and successfully. After treatment, 10-20% of patients may continue to have persistent and recurrent symptoms of Lyme disease. Once this occurs, the patient is considered to have Post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome or also referred to

as “chronic Lyme disease.” There are clinical studies currently under development for chronic Lyme disease treatment options.

It’s always a good idea to take preventative measures against ticks, especially in the warmer months when they are most active.

Ways to prevent ticks include:

- Avoid wooded, high grass, and leaf litter areas
- Wear light-colored long pants and long sleeves
- Use repellents containing 20-30% DEET
- Use products containing permethrin on clothing

If someone comes in contact with a tick, there are different ways to find and remove ticks from the body. First, bathe or shower quickly to wash off excess ticks crawling around on the body. Perform a full-body examination using a mirror to view all parts of the body. Examine clothes and pets. Ticks can sometimes come into a home on clothing and attach to a person later. Clothes can be heated in the dryer on high for an hour to kill remaining ticks.

Once a tick is found, there is one safe way to remove a tick attached to the skin. Use a set of fine tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Next, pull upward with steady pressure. Try not to twist or jerk the tick, which can cause parts to break off and remain on the skin. After removing the tick, clean the bite area and hands with rubbing alcohol, iodine scrub, or soap and water.

Resources:

http://www.lymedisease.org/lyme101/lyme_disease/lyme_disease.html

http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/signs_symptoms/index.html

<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/diagnostesting/index.html>

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/lymedisease/understanding/pages/chronic.aspx>

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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