What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is an illness that can make you feel like you have the flu. It can also cause a rash, fever, or nerve, joint, and heart problems.

People can get Lyme disease after being bitten by a tiny insect called a tick. When a certain type of tick bites you, it can transmit the germ that causes Lyme disease from its body to yours. A tick can infect you only if it stays attached for a period of time, typically one day.

The ticks that carry Lyme disease feed on deer and mice. Ticks are found in tall grass and on shrubs, and can attach to animals and people walking by. Ticks cannot fly or jump.

What are the symptoms of Lyme Disease?

Symptoms can start days or weeks after a tick bite:

- A rash where you were bitten often appears within a month of getting bitten. It is red, but its center can be the color of your skin. It might get bigger over a few days.
- Fever
- Feeling tired
- Body aches and pains
- Heart problems such as a slowed heart rate
- Headache and stiff neck

If a person is not treated, further symptoms can occur months to years after a tick bite. These include:

- Pain and swelling of joints, such as your knees
- Trouble with your memory and thinking

What can I do to try to avoid getting bitten?

- Wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants when you go outside. Keep ticks away from your skin by tucking your pants into your socks.
- Wear light colors so you can spot any ticks that get on your clothes.
- Use bug sprays to keep ticks off your skin or clothes.
- Shower within 2 hours of being outdoors if you think you have been in an area where there are ticks.
- Check your clothes and body for ticks after being outdoors. Be sure to check your scalp, waist, armpits, groin, and backs of your knees. Check your children, too.
- If you live in a place that has deer or mice nearby, take steps to keep those animals away.

If you find a tick on your body or on your child, use tweezers to grab it and pull it out slowly and gently. Then, wash the area with soap and water. If the head is still in the body after taking the tick off it will not be infected with the disease any longer. You should watch the area around the bite for a month to see if a rash occurs.