Lyme Disease 2
Courtesy of the State Compensation Insurance Fund

Lyme Disease is a serious, tick-borne illness that can cause chronic muscle pain, inflammatory arthritis, heart disease and/or neurological disorders. Because the disease can be long term and debilitating, early recognition and diagnosis is important so that it can be successfully treated with antibiotics.

In California, Lyme Disease is transmitted to humans by black-leg ticks. These ticks, which are more abundant in spring and early summer, are smaller than common dog or cattle ticks so they can easily go unnoticed. When possible, avoid tick habitats such as brushy or overgrown grassy and wooded areas and reduce tick and host (deer and rodent) habitats by removing leaves, tall grass, and brush from around work areas.

In situations where you can’t avoid or clear tick and host habitats protect yourself by:

- Wearing light-colored clothes so that ticks can be easily seen and removed before attachment
- Covering exposed skin with a long-sleeved shirt, a hat, gloves, and neck scarf, long pants tucked into socks with high boots or closed shoes that cover the entire foot
- Applying insect repellents on the skin and permethrin on clothes which kills ticks
- Carefully examining the body for ticks and then showering after working in high risk areas
- Washing in hot water clothing worn in high risk areas
- Promptly removing an attached tick with tweezers and thoroughly cleaning the affected area with an antiseptic

The diagnosis of Lyme Disease is primarily based on a known exposure and recognition of disease symptoms. Flu-like symptoms may include a fever, lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, generalized fatigue, headaches, migrating joint aches and/or muscle aches. Lyme Disease often – but not always – is characterized by a ‘bulls-eye’ rash in addition to symptoms.

Take precautionary measures in high-risk areas and if disease symptoms appear, see a doctor immediately.