

## Healthy Living: May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month - What You Don't Know Can Hurt You

By Dr. Veronica Collings, DC, (Excerpts from *Alternatives Newsletter*, December 2004, by Dr. David Williams )

Lyme disease is the most common and fastest-growing vector-borne disease in the US. People of all ages are vulnerable to Lyme disease, but most at risk include gardeners, golfers, hikers, pet owners, and just about anyone who enjoys the outdoors.

This much-misdiagnosed disease has been found to mimic the symptoms of as many as 350 other diseases and is an epidemic in every state. Lyme is caused by a spirochete, a corkscrew-shaped bacterium named *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Bb). Much like the syphilis spirochete, which, last century, mimicked hundreds of diseases, Lyme is now causing the same kind of havoc without the same simple cure. Lyme can't be cured with a dose of penicillin. The spirochetes of Lyme can worm their way into muscles, tendons, and practically every organ in the body. They can avoid detection by your immune system because they can change their shape. Most antibiotics work by destroying the cell wall of bacteria. Bb can exist without the cell wall, which makes most antibiotics useless.

Lyme was first identified in 1975, when ticks (*Ixodes*) were thought to be the only carrier and a "bull's-eye rash" necessary for its identification. Now it has been shown that this only occurs in one-fifth to one-half of cases and ticks are not the only carriers. Live spirochetes of Lyme have been found in fleas, mites, and mosquitoes. Live spirochetes have also been found in blood, urine, tears, semen, breast milk, cord blood, and vaginal secretions. Doctors who specialize in treating the disease are convinced it can be passed from one infected person to another by several means, including repeated sexual contact and through the placenta in the womb. Given how similar it is to syphilis, this makes sense.

That Lyme can mimic so many problems was discovered when doctors watched "incurable" diseases disappear miraculously after treating their patients for Lyme. Some of the diseases that Lyme mimics are Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, Bell's palsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, peripheral neuropathy, fibromyalgia, schizophrenia, irritable bowel syndrome, coronary artery disease, heart failure, heart palpitations, attention



deficit disorder, chronic pain syndromes, sleep apnea, mitral valve prolapse, endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome, Menieres disease, esophageal reflux, gallbladder inflammation, and various autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome, lupus, and scleroderma.

The standard blood tests recommended to diagnose Lyme are also in question. The ELISA test and the most widely used Western Blot provide many false negatives. Many doctors unfamiliar with Lyme don't realize that, if the patient has been taking steroids, antibiotics, or anti-inflammatory meds - even over the counter drugs such as ibuprofen - the Western Blot can provide false negatives. If you read my recent article, "The Bio-electromagnetic You," you may remember that there is a way of using your body's neuromuscular response to find out if something is affecting you adversely. With one case in my office, I had found the Lyme's spirochete reactive to bi-digital o-ring test, but tested negative on both of the usual tests. The patient had a symptom picture indicative of Lyme. I recommended that his medical doctor order the more accurate Lyme tests offered by the IGenEX Labs ([www.igenex.com](http://www.igenex.com)) and that did show a positive result.

Since, like syphilis, Lyme can lie dormant for many years after initial infection and wreak havoc when your immune system is challenged by other stressors such as traumas, emotional stress, or other infections, it's worth checking if intractable symptoms appear without clear diagnoses. Most common are migrating

joint pains and inflammation anywhere in the body.

Most recently, I had a patient in my office with neck pain radiating down her arm so severe that she was unable to work. After many medical interventions, including rheumatologists and many steroidal and other drugs, she was finally left with surgery as her only option. Since her diagnostic tests were not conclusive, she decided to see me for a conservative option before she took that irreversible step. As I do routinely with patients with this presentation, I checked her for her body's reaction to the Lyme spirochete and, sure enough, she showed positive. The holistic approach includes supporting her immune system with an herb called cat's claw, a homeopathic remedy specific to Lyme, and diet changes to support sugar balance to keep her strong. In about two weeks after implementing this protocol and including Total Body Modification ([www.TBMseminars.com](http://www.TBMseminars.com)), she was back to work and nearly resolved. The recommendation on the cat's claw is 8-18 months of continuous use to ensure that the Bb does not go dormant and recur.

If you spend time in wooded areas, use a DEET-free insect repellent such as Shoo-Bug on your clothes. Check for ticks after your hike, but keep in mind that ticks carrying Lyme can be as small as the point of a pencil and very hard to find. If you find a tick, remove it with tweezers by grasping the jaw area and pulling it straight out. Place the tick in a sandwich bag. Generally, the tick needs to be attached for 12 or more hours before it can pass on the infection, so removing the tick as soon as possible and treating the skin around the bite with alcohol can prevent infection. Some practitioners do not believe in that 12-hour window, but it's worth implementing the precaution just in case. There are several medical doctors in our area that specialize in treating Lyme disease. If you are more comfortable with the medical antibiotic approach, they can be found in Lyme-specific websites, such as American Lyme Disease Foundation, [www.lymediseaseassociation.org](http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org) or [www.aldf.com](http://www.aldf.com) org. If you are baffled with health concerns for which you have only been able to treat by covering symptoms with drugs, it is well worth the effort to rule out the possibility of Lyme disease.