

Lyme Disease – Quick Key Facts for Health Professionals

- Lyme disease (LD) is an infection caused by the bacterial spirochaete *Borrelia burgdorferi*, passed to humans via bite of an infected tick
- Ticks exist throughout the UK and worldwide
- Ticks are tiny and their bites are **painless**, so can easily go unnoticed
- Attached ticks should be carefully removed as soon as possible - ideally using a tick removal tool
- **Early diagnosis & treatment of LD gives best chance of cure**
- *Erythema migrans* (EM) rash is diagnostic of LD **BUT**
 - typically takes 3-30 days to appear, but absent in 30% of cases
 - bull's eye appearance occurs in around a third of cases
 - is more typically a uniform expanding, painless rash
 - more difficult to see on darker skins
 - may not be at the site of the tick bite, can be single or multiple
 - can be easily misdiagnosed as another insect bite or allergy
 - [see more rash images in NICE Lyme disease guideline \(95\)](#)
- Diagnosis of Lyme disease should be based on history (include outdoor activity, travel) and clinical symptoms +/- Lyme disease serology
- **Testing is not required if EM rash is present.**
- **A negative blood test does not exclude LD diagnosis**
- If clinical suspicion of LD without EM rash, consider starting treatment whilst awaiting test results.
- 10-20 % of patients report significant ongoing symptoms after standard treatment
- Symptoms in early or late disseminated LD stages may be multisystemic and mimic other conditions
- [NICE Lyme disease guideline \(NG95\)](#) provides advice on diagnosis and treatment
- [BMJ Summary Lyme Antibiotics](#) is a useful quick reference for prescribing – note antibiotic doses are higher and of longer duration than typically used
- [RCGP Lyme disease toolkit](#) provides evidence based advice, information and quick reference guides to diagnosis and treatment.
- [Lyme Resource Centre website](#) provides information for health professionals
- Raising public awareness will reduce risk from tick bites and enable early recognition of signs and symptoms of Lyme disease, so that appropriate, timely medical intervention can be sought.



[RCGP Lyme Disease Toolkit](#)



[NICE Guideline 95](#)



[BMJ Summary Lyme Antibiotics](#)

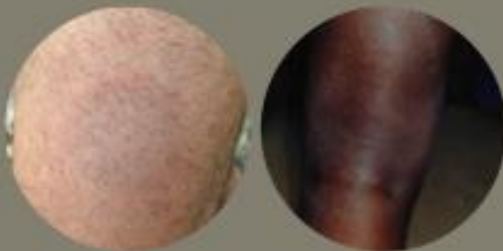


[Lyme Resource Centre website](#)



The Many Forms of Lyme Disease Rashes (Erythema Migrans)

Faint colors and borders



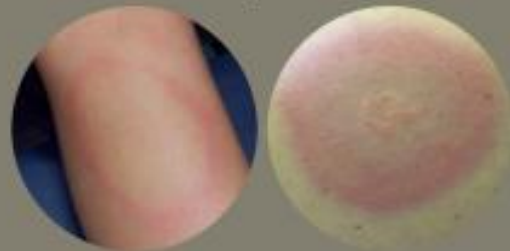
Crusted centers



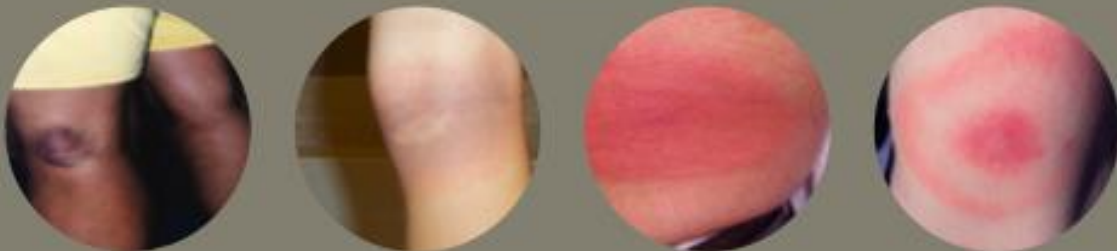
More than one rash



Different shapes and colors



Appearing anywhere on the body



Most people with Lyme disease develop an erythema migrans rash at the site of the tick bite. The rash usually expands slowly over several days reaching up to 12 inches or more (30 cm) across. **However, not all rashes are a sign of Lyme disease.** The redness in the picture to the left is caused by irritation to the tick bite — not a tickborne infection.