

# Lyme Disease

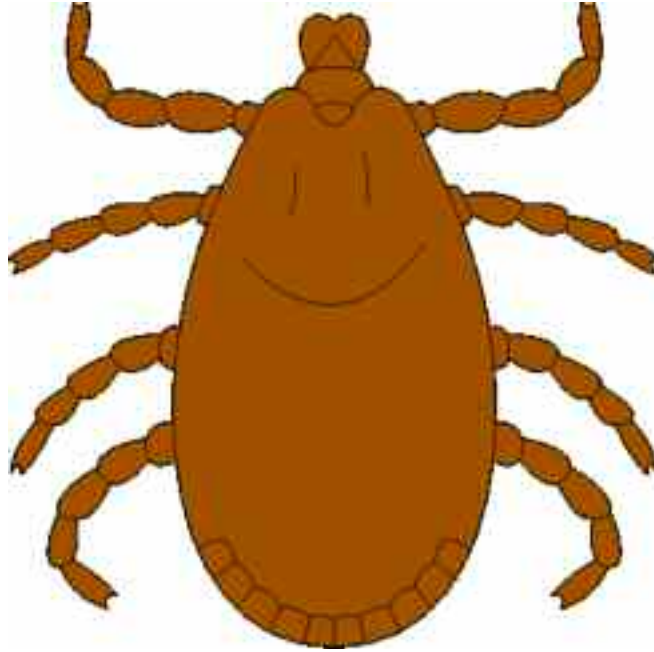
By Jodi Weishaar Hendrickson

I would like all my friends, especially with children, to be aware of Lyme Disease and some of the simple steps to take to prevent getting Lyme. It's worth taking a few precautions. I'm not locking my kids up, don't worry. I'm planning on having them live normal, active lives. But, I feel it is very important to know that Lyme is the fastest growing epidemic in the US, and I don't want anyone to go through Lyme, especially Chronic (long-term) Lyme.

I wish I would have known more about this growing disease. I would have been more likely to recognize Lyme when I first came down with it when I was hospitalized in 1997 for an "unknown" virus or bacteria. While hospitalized they tested me for Lyme (along with numerous other diseases) and I had a false negative. I've recently learned that false negatives are very common in Chronic Lyme.

After my one-week hospital stay, I returned to my parent's ranch in South Dakota where they helped me until I could do everything on my own once again. At the time, I had already been living in Texas for eight or nine months. I was still unable to do much of anything and continued to have several of the symptoms. After about a month I returned to my job in Texas and took it easy for the next year. I had three or four relapses within that year, typically high fever and achiness. After about a year, I felt back to normal. For the next nine years I was very healthy, got married had two little girls, and had a successful career with *Western Horseman*.

It was in 2007; about one-and-a-half months after my second daughter was born that I was hit with sudden and strange symptoms that reminded me of my hospital stay nine years ago. I had flown back to South Dakota with my two-year-old and one-month-old daughters while on maternity leave.



While in South Dakota I had helped Dad work cows one day. It was really hot and we were out early that morning and didn't get back in until late that night. It was that evening that I started to feel strange things happening with myself. I was dizzy and my head was buzzing. I was unbalanced, I had trouble finding words, I had a horrible headache and I threw the both of the girl's pajamas in the garbage!

In the back of my mind it somehow reminded me of my strange illness in 1997. This was the start of my relapse and two-and-a-half year trek to find out what was wrong with me. I continually got worse: headaches, numbness and tingling in my arms and face, dizziness, confusion, short term memory problems, constant chest pain and recurring infections in my teeth and feet. I was sent from doctor to doctor receiving a stress test on my heart, MRI's of my head, CT scans of my chest, and countless blood work ups. They found nothing.

I started to feel like I was crazy and began to write it off as stress. I had a full time job managing several people, and had two little girls to take care of. Stress was an easy target.

I knew in my heart that this was not normal and I wasn't going to accept a life

feeling this way, so I didn't give up. I just didn't feel right and knew these symptoms were not normal for even the busiest of thirty-five year olds. I felt like I was eighty! Finally I was sent to a doctor that asked for my entire history. He listened! The hospital stay in 1997, along with my current symptoms, led him to test me for Lyme.

That was November 2009. I was positive with Chronic Lyme. The longer it's in your body, the more established it becomes and it will start to settle in your nervous system, brain, muscles, joints, bones, heart, etc. This is what had happened to me. I was glad that I knew what I was dealing

with, but was scared too. If I would've had a correct diagnoses in 1997, I probably wouldn't have the problems I have today. An early diagnosis (within the first couple months of a bite) can give you a good chance of eradicating Lyme. It's also extremely important that your doctor uses an **IGeneX lab test**. They are far more accurate. You can learn more about accurate testing on the [lads.org](http://lads.org) site or go to [igenex.com](http://igenex.com).

I've always believed "nothing can happen to me." I've always been healthy. Remember, a little knowledge can go a long way. Don't be paranoid, but know what to look for. A few simple steps can be a BIG help. We all live our lives with ticks, we're outdoor lovers, cowgirls, ranchers, campers, hunters, hikers, etc. We won't stop living our lives the way we always have, but we can be aware and take a few precautions that can change our future.

Don't let anyone tell you that Lyme is not in your state. Each state is infected, (all of North America, actually) and the number is rising each year. Over 200,000 people were diagnosed with it in 2009. Because so many cases are mis-diagnosed, they feel this number could actually be much higher. People with long term Lyme are misdiagnosed with

Alzheimer's, MS, ALS, arthritis, fibromyalgia, lupus, chronic fatigue syndrome and several others.

I'm fighting it everyday and wouldn't wish it on anyone. I take five different antibiotics, Mepron (a drug used for Malaria) and various other supplements. In all, I take around thirty-five pills a day. My life has definitely changed, but only for the time being. I have taken a break from my magazine start up, *FringeCowgirl.com*, to focus on recovering. And, my supportive family has been essential to working through the different treatments.

#### **Prevention and What To Do If You Become Ill Or Get a Tick Bite:**

A couple things to consider are: A tick does not need to be on you for twenty-four hours or more to pass Lyme, it can be a much shorter time.

The other thing is to use Avon's Skin So Soft on your kids when they are out-

side. My doctor feels it is much more effective and safer than Deet. Ticks hate Skin So Soft!

Lastly, check your kids and yourself for ticks after being outside for a day. Remember, the ticks can be as small as a poppy seed and have been found in belly buttons, eyelashes and eyebrows. Spiders, mosquitoes and mites can also pass Lyme.

If you do see a tick on yourself or your child there are some very important steps you should take. First, take a tweezers and get as close to the skin as possible, then pull the tick out. Try not to kill the tick. Put it in a baggy and send the tick to a lab for testing.

The next step is to get on at least one month of antibiotics; Doxycycline is the preferred choice in most cases. Do this immediately! If your doctor won't give you a month supply, find a doctor that will. It can change your life. For more in-

formation on testing and what to do when you have been bitten, go to: [www.ilads.org](http://www.ilads.org)

If you feel you could have Chronic Lyme or just want to learn more about the symptoms, go to: [www.ilads.org](http://www.ilads.org)

Under Our Skin - Movie Trailer - 2009 Documentary with Lyme patients [www.underourskin.com/](http://www.underourskin.com/). Click on "Trailer" (for movie trailer) in the bottom left hand portion of the screen.

I wish I would have known more, so I want to share what I have learned. I feel like one of the lucky ones. I at least know what I have and can now work to get it out of my body.

Sincerely,  
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