Lyme Disease – Quick Key Facts for Health Professionals

LRC
LYME RESOURCE CENTRE
Registered Scottish charity SC049151

- Lyme disease (LD) is an infection caused by the bacterial *Borrelia burgdorferi,* passed to humans via bite of an infected tick
- 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**
- Early *localised* Lyme disease → erythema migrans (EM) rash and / or flu-like symptoms
- *Erythema migrans* (EM) rash is diagnostic of LD ***BUT***
  - is absent in 30% of cases
  - bull's eye appearance occurs in around a third of cases
  - is more typically a uniform expanding, painless rash
  - typically takes 3-30 days to appear, more difficult to see on darker skins
  - may not be at the site of the tick bite, can be single or multiple
- Erythema migrans is easily misdiagnosed as another insect bite, allergy, ring worm
- Early or late *disseminated* Lyme disease
  - symptoms may be multi-systemic (neurological, cardiac, musculoskeletal, psychiatric, dermatological) & can mimic other conditions.
- **Testing is not required if EM rash is present** NICE Lyme disease guideline (NG95)
- Diagnosis of Lyme disease should be based on history (include outdoor activity, travel) and clinical symptoms +/- Lyme disease serology
- **A negative blood test does not exclude LD diagnosis**
- 10-20 % of patients report significant ongoing symptoms after standard treatment
- 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 prescribed duration longer than typically used
- RCGP Lyme disease toolkit provides quick reference guides to diagnosis, treatment as well as links to a range of evidence-based information
- Health professionals play a key role in raising public awareness of the importance of tick bite prevention & early recognition of the symptoms of LD – see Lyme Resource Centre website for evidence-based resources for health professionals and public.

RCGP Lyme Disease Toolkit

NICE Guideline 95 - Lyme disease

BMJ Summary Lyme Antibiotics

Lyme disease – What health professionals need to know