

Sometimes when you catch a bug, you need to look for the bite

Focus on Lyme disease and flu-like symptoms



Lyme disease is a bacterial infection primarily transmitted by deer ticks that affects more than 300,000 North Americans per year. However, because diagnosing Lyme disease can be difficult, many people who actually have Lyme disease may be misdiagnosed with other conditions, and many experts believe the actual number of cases may be much higher.

Lyme disease affects people of all ages. The Centers for Disease Control notes that it is most common in children, older adults, and others such as first responders and forest rangers who spend time in outdoor activities and have higher exposure to ticks.

The symptoms of early Lyme disease resemble those of the flu, including:

- fever
- chills and sweats
- muscle aches and fatigue
- nausea
- joint pain

In addition, one of the most common indicators of early Lyme disease is a bulls-eye rash at the site of the tick bite. However, this telltale symptom is often faint or hidden on a remote part of the body, while some people don't get the rash at all.

As with these early indicators, other Lyme disease symptoms (such as cognitive impairment, poor sleep, mood problems, and neurological issues) also occur in other diseases, making the symptoms of Lyme disease significantly overlap those of a host of other conditions, including:

- fibromyalgia
- rheumatoid arthritis
- multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Lou Gehrig's disease (also called ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis)
- Alzheimer's disease

Because misdiagnosis of Lyme disease is particularly common, the need for a comprehensive approach to your care becomes even greater. If you have flu-like symptoms and other circumstances that could indicate the prospect of Lyme disease, you should be skeptical about any diagnosis and open to the value of a second opinion.

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