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BEWARE OF TICK BITES

If you intend to make the most of the great outdoors this spring and summer make sure you go prepared and are aware of the risk of tick bites.

Lyme disease (or Lyme borreliosis) is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, itself transmitted by a wood tick bite.

The ticks that cause Lyme disease are commonly found in woodland and heath land areas. This is because these types of habitats have high number of tick-carrying animals, such as deer and mice. Some areas have a higher prevalence in BFG i.e. Rhine, Sennelager and Fallingbostal. Due to their breeding patterns, the tick population is at it is highest during late spring and early summer.

Take sensible precautions

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to take sensible precautions when you are in areas that are known to have a high tick population, especially from March to October.

You can reduce the risk of infection by:

- Wearing appropriate clothing (long-sleeve shirt, trousers ticked into socks, closed shoes)
- Using tick repellent
- Walking in the centre of paths to avoid overhanging grass and bushes
- Inspecting your skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck, and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband)
- Making sure that your children's head and neck areas, including scalps, are properly checked
- Checking that ticks are not brought home on your clothes. Better still, wash and dry clothing as attached ticks can stay alive without feeding for many days.

- Checking that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur. Use a pet collar impregnated with a tick repellent.
- If you are bitten by a tick and are concerned about infection, seek advice from the Medical centre

How to remove a tick

If you find a tick on your skin (or your child's skin), you should remove it by gently gripping it as close to the skin as possible, preferably using fine toothed tweezers, and pull steadily away from the skin.

Ticks tweezers are available from gyms and medical centers.

What does Lyme disease feel like?

A tick will settle anywhere on a human body, but prefers warm, moist and dark places like the crotch or armpits. When the tick has found a suitable place on the body, it sticks in its probe to draw up blood, exposing the person bitten to the risk of infection.

Simply seeing a tick somewhere on your body does not mean that you have contracted Lyme disease. Unfortunately, not everyone knows when they have been bitten so seek advice from the Medical centre if you detect the following symptoms:

- A red spot around the location of the tick's bite. The spot will gradually grow bigger, often with a pale area in the middle.
- Some patients with Lyme disease feel like they have caught flu and show symptoms such as drowsiness, headaches, mild fever and joint, and muscle pains.

If Lyme disease is diagnosed in its early stages, in most cases it can be treated with antibiotics.