

Lyme Disease 101 (See also: www.lymedisease.org www.lymediseaseassociation.org)

1. **We DO have Lyme in Oregon.** New CDC data shows that Hood River county is highly endemic for Lyme disease, which means that the type of ticks that carry Lyme have been reported in this county, as well as several other counties in Oregon.
2. **Everyone with Lyme does NOT get a bulls-eye rash.** Fewer than 20% of Lyme patients on the west coast EVER notice any kind of rash. Rashes that are noticed may appear as a bulls-eye or in many other forms that can often be mistaken for ringworm, eczema, poison-oak, psoriasis, etc.
3. **Lyme is easy to get and hard to cure unless treated early.** Lyme has been reported nationwide, and unless treated quickly, the bacteria can invade every kind of cell in your body – teeth, bones, eyes, brain, heart, muscles, and organs. Left untreated, it can cause permanent damage. Those suffering from late-stage Lyme disease have shown continuing improvement with long term doses of antibiotics.
4. **Lyme ticks travel in many ways.** Robins are the most common carriers of Lyme infected ticks. Deer, mice, deer, rats, squirrels, birds and raccoons are also carriers. Lyme ticks have even been found on commercial jet airlines within the last year, so people are carriers too.
5. **Information on prevention** measures can be found here:
http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=29&Itemid=423
6. **Information on symptoms** can be found here:
http://www.lymedisease.org/lyme101/lyme_disease/lyme_symptoms.html

What to do if you get a tick bite

1. **Remove the tick with tweezers by pulling straight out and save it.** Do NOT squeeze, use oil, a match or your fingers to remove it. If you can't remove it completely, go to the emergency room ASAP. More information on tick removal and testing can be found here:
http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=88:tick-removal&catid=65:tick-removal-a-testing&Itemid=181
2. **Send the tick in for testing.** www.igenex.com is the west coast lab for this. It's much easier and significantly cheaper to test the tick than it is to test a person since people vary in their ability to produce antibodies. An infected person may take weeks or months to test positive - tests catch only about 50% of the cases. Some people infected with Lyme disease never test positive on any Lyme test.
3. **See a Lyme literate doctor** if the tick is embedded for more than just a couple hours. Joan Laurence, ND is the most Lyme literate Gorge physician 541-386-4844. Some local doctors don't think we have Lyme and don't know how serious, and even deadly, Lyme can be if left untreated.
4. **4-6 weeks of doxycycline** should kill the Lyme bacteria and remove the risk of getting Lyme disease – if caught early (within one month of tick bite).
5. **CDC says that Lyme is a clinical diagnosis** and that tests may provide evidence to support a diagnosis which is the best reason to see an expert Lyme doctor

More questions? Contact the local Lyme support group leader, Elaine Walker, 541-490-4019 or visit the meetings, the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm in the boardroom of the Hood River Valley Adult Center located at 2010 Sterling Place, Hood River.

The documentary "Under Our Skin" (<http://www.underourskin.com/>) provides more information about Lyme Disease. It is intense, preview before sharing with children.

You can watch it for free on Hulu here: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/268761>