

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a condition that causes a multitude of symptoms affecting the nerves, muscles, bones, and heart. It can cause arthritis, painful muscles, sensory disturbances, and cardiac symptoms.

It is caused by a spirochete *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is the most common vector- (insect) borne disease in the United States.

The causative agent is transmitted through infected insect bites. Most commonly the deer tick, but, recently, biting flies (deer and horse flies) have been incriminated.

There have been cases reported from 43 states, but the majority of cases occur in the three principle locations: the Northeast, the upper Midwest, and the far West. The areas are increasing, partly due to the increased deer population and the migration of infected birds.

Lyme disease most commonly occurs from May to October, when insects are most active. Contact with the vector is usually in areas of underbrush and tall grasses, but it may occur in well mown lawns in endemic areas. In some areas of the United States, up to 80% of the adult tick population is infected.

Of course, the best treatment is prevention of the bite. This requires proper clothing and the use of an insecticide containing DEET. One such insecticide is "Deep Woods Off."

Lyme disease is found in Michigan, and there are a number of cases in our Michigan church family.