Minnesota Department of
Education

Lyme Disease Information Sheet

Lyme disease is an infectious disease caused by bacteria carried by deer ticks. Deer ticks are brown and when young, they are as small as the head of a pin, which can make them very difficult to see. Deer ticks are prevalent in the Midwest, which has heavily wooded areas where deer ticks thrive. Children and adults who spend a great deal of time outdoors are especially at risk.

Ticks attach easily to bare flesh. People who live in an area where ticks are common should protect themselves and their children by wearing long sleeves and long pants and by keeping pets from wandering in tall weeds and grasses.

Bacteria from a tick bite can enter a person's bloodstream only if the tick stays attached to the skin for 36 to 48 hours or longer. Remove the tick within two days and the risk of acquiring Lyme disease is low.

Symptoms and Signs

Symptoms vary among individuals, but may include

- A rash or red bump, similar to a bull's-eye target, at the site of the bite
- Flu-like symptoms
- Joint pain
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Eye inflammation

Treatment

Treatment for Lyme disease is most effective if begun early. If infected, the most common treatment will include antibiotics. If the disease has progressed to a later stage, hospitalization and other treatments may be necessary. After treatment, a small number of people still experience some symptoms, such as muscle aches and fatigue.

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Educational Implications

In addition to physical symptoms, Lyme disease may cause neurological difficulties that result in cognitive deficits. These deficits may relate to difficulties with speech, dementia, dyslexia, maintaining focus, retrieving information and short and long-term memory. These issues may be manifest in the classroom with forgetfulness, inattention, distractibility, restlessness, articulation errors and reversals in math and spelling.

Educational Options

Those students whose Lyme disease adversely affects their educational performance may benefit from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To qualify under IDEA, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of thirteen specific disability categories. Under IDEA, a student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and an individualized education program, including individual goals, objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications.

Students that do not qualify for services under IDEA may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example learning, breathing, thinking, concentrating, walking, bodily functions). Under Section 504, a student is entitled to equal opportunity, and may qualify for a Section 504 plan that provides regular or special education and related aids and services.

A student with a health condition who does not require special instruction and related services can receive, as appropriate, a wide range of supports in the general education classroom, including accommodations, individualized health plans (IHP), emergency care plans (ECP) and local education agency supports.

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