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Don't Get Ticked Off

Natural Ways to Avoid and Treat Lyme Disease

by Linda Sechrist

In 1977, two Yale School of Medicine scientists identified the infected black-legged deer tick carrying the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* as the disease-transmitting organism of Lyme disease. Since 1982, this most commonly reported vector-borne disease in the U.S. has gained notoriety, with its own resource book, *Disease Update: Science, Policy & Law*; research center (Columbia-Lyme.org/index.html); International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society website, ilads.org; *Lyme Times* print journal (LymeDisease.org); and national informational organization, the Tick-Borne Disease Alliance (TBDAlliance.org).

The surge of activity appears justifiable. According to scientists at the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 300,000 cases are diagnosed annually in this country alone.

Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*, is a post-treatment Lyme disease patient and co-founder of LymeAid4Kids (Tinyurl.com/LymeAid4Kids) that funds the diagnosis and treatment of uninsured children with Lyme. She disagrees with physicians that downplay late-stage cases and insist that the disease is cured with a simple round of antibiotics, as does Katina Makris, a classical homeopath from New Hampshire and host of *Lyme Light Radio*.

After experiencing mysterious symptoms, Makris spent five years suffering from debilitating symptoms familiar to individuals with Lyme—undiagnosed, relapsing fevers, lingering fatigue, joint pain, headaches, neurological symptoms and cognitive impairment. “Then I finally began my 10-year healing journey,” she says. Her book *Out of the Woods: Healing from Lyme Disease for Body, Mind, and Spirit*, is a recovery memoir and resource guide for alternative medical, emotional and spiritual support.

Lyme evades detection by standard blood tests for bacterial antigens and antibodies. “The ELISA [enzyme-linked immuno assay] test is only accurate between two weeks and two months after the bite,” says Makris, who notes that the Western Blot test is somewhat more accurate, while the IGeneX Laboratory test is superior. She believes the best laboratories for testing are Clongen Laboratories and IGeneX Laboratory Services.

Dr. Richard Horowitz has treated more than 12,000 Lyme disease patients as medical director of the Hudson Valley Healing Arts Center, in Hyde Park, New York. The author of *Why Can't I Get Better? Solving the Mystery of Lyme and Chronic Disease* raises another red flag regarding detection.

Testing for coinfections frequently transmitted along with Lyme is unreliable. Horowitz, who will conduct a workshop with Makris at New York's Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, in Rhinebeck, and online, from June 26 to 28, counsels that antibiotics are not effective because they don't address all of the infecting organisms now frequently found in ticks.

Stephen Harrod Buhner, of Silver City, New Mexico, an independent scholar and citizen scientist and author of *Healing Lyme Disease Coinfections*, says that the bacteria have jumped species and found new hosts that live in habitats formerly occupied by wild animals: "They have learned to exist in humans and are teaching each other how to resist antibiotics and more easily infect us. What they do together in the body is a great deal more complex than what they do alone, making them difficult to treat. *Bartonella* species utilize the immune system of whatever mammal they infect as part of their infection strategy. Any existing inflammation in the body, such as arthritis, facilitates the growth of *Bartonella*."

Essential Oils to Repel Ticks

1 cup distilled water
2 drops geranium essential oil
2 drops Palo Santo essential oil
1 drop myrrh essential oil
4 drops grapefruit essential oil
1 drop peppermint essential oil
1 drop Thieves hand soap or castile soap

Place all ingredients in a spray bottle and shake. Spritz on socks, sneakers/hiking boots, ankles and legs at a minimum and consider other exposed skin.

The weaker or more compromised one's immune system, the more likely a debilitating course of illness will occur. An improved immune system can identify the outer membrane proteins of the offending bacteria and create countering antibodies in four to eight months. "Once the immune system creates the proper antibodies, the bacteria

are then eliminated fairly rapidly," advises Buhner.

Makris is grateful that she saw a nutritionist trained in functional medicine. "He worked slowly and methodically to reduce the inflammation, build up my immune system and restore my digestive, endocrine and nervous systems before killing the bacteria and opening up natural detoxification pathways to flush out the bacteria and their endotoxins. We used weekly acupuncture appointments, good nutrition and homeopathic formulas, plus various herbs, vitamins and mineral supplements," says Makris.

Ticks in high-vegetation areas wait for a passing host. To avoid these hitchhikers, wear light-colored long pants tucked into socks. A shirt should also be tucked in. Later, strip down and search hair, underarms, legs, behind the knees and ears, and in the belly button. As commercial tick repellants contain toxic ingredients, a targeted mixture of topically applied, therapeutic-grade essential oils is preferred.

Linda Sechrist is the senior staff writer for Natural Awakenings.

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