

LYME DISEASE

Deer Ticks: To Test or Not to Test?

Q: I removed a tick from my body, should I have the tick tested?

A: People who have remove a tick often wonder if they should have it tested. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that the **testing of individual ticks is not useful because:**

- The testing of ticks for the presence of the bacteria that causes Lyme disease has no role in the clinical diagnosis of Lyme disease.
- If the test shows the tick contained disease-causing organisms, that does not necessarily mean that you have been infected.
- If someone has been infected by a tick bite, symptoms may begin to occur even before the results of tick testing are available. People should not wait for tick testing results before seeking medical advice should any symptoms develop.
- Negative results can lead to false assurance. For example, you may have been unknowingly bitten by a different tick that was infected.
- Tests performed on the ticks are not perfect and they do not test for all infections ticks may be carrying. Therefore, even with a negative result, people should still monitor themselves for the appearance of rash, fever or other unusual symptoms and immediately seek the advice of a health care provider should any symptoms occur.
- A positive test on a tick is not an automatic indication that treatment is needed. A positive test indicates that the tick was infected but not that the tick was successful in spreading the infection to the person bitten. The longer a tick is attached to you, the greater the chance that it will spread infection.

Found a tick? Contact your health care provider to discuss how best to proceed.

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