

## Questions and answers about the Lyme disease vaccine

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted by infected deer ticks. The Lyme disease vaccine offers some protection from this infection. The information below can help you decide whether the vaccine is right for you.

**Q.** Should I get the Lyme disease vaccination?

**A.** The US Public Health Service suggests the vaccine for people who are at high or moderate risk of getting Lyme disease. You are at high risk if you

- Live in a county where Lyme disease is common and have deer that come onto your property, especially if the area right around your home has wooded, brushy, or grassy areas
- Work or spend leisure time outdoors on a frequent or prolonged basis in an area where Lyme disease is common.

You are at moderate risk if you live, work, or spend leisure time in an area where Lyme disease is common, but your exposure to tick-infested habitats is not frequent or prolonged.

You are at low risk if you do not live in an area where Lyme disease is often transmitted or if you do but you rarely spend time in areas where ticks live. In this case the vaccine is not recommended.

**Q.** Does it matter when I get the vaccine?

**A.** To be sure you are protected, you must get 3 doses of the vaccine. To build up protection for the next Lyme disease season, the first dose should be followed by a second dose 1 month later. You should get the third dose 12 months after the second dose. The series of shots should be timed so that the second dose in year 1 and the third dose in year 2 are given before the Lyme disease transmission period begins (in April in the Eastern United States). You may also need a booster dose next year.

**Q.** Is the vaccine completely effective?

**A.** After 3 doses, the vaccine is very effective. But as with any vaccine, it may not protect everyone. As a result, you should still take measures to protect yourself against tick bites. Remember to

- Wear light-colored clothes to make it easier to spot ticks
- Wear long pants and long sleeves to cover exposed skin
- Use a tick repellent, such as permethrin, on clothes
- Use the insecticide DEET on exposed skin
- Check for ticks after being outside
- Remove ticks right away
- Mow your lawn often, and cut back any dense shrub or bush.

If you are bitten by a tick, see your doctor right away if you have signs of a tick-borne illness. Signs include fever and flu-like symptoms or a rash at the site of the bite. The rash is usually round or oval, but it can take other shapes.

**Q.** Should my children receive the vaccine?

**A.** The vaccine has not yet been approved for children under 15. But studies are being conducted to see if the vaccine is safe and effective in children over 4. To protect your children, follow the precautions above.

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