

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter

Lyme Disease Basics

By Kari Brossard Stoos, Ph.D. with Brooke Hansen

Lyme disease is an illness that results from a bacterium (*Borrelia burgdorferi*) that is transmitted through the bites of blacklegged ticks. These ticks are very small bugs (arthropods) that may be no larger than the size of the head of a pin. Ticks feed on the blood of animals and humans. A tick carrying the bacteria will bite a human and will continue to feed for approximately 24-48 hours. During this time, the bacteria from the tick can be transferred to the human. Ticks also carry other microorganisms, which can lead to infections such as babesiosis and anaplasmosis (www.cdc.gov/ticks/diseases).

Removing ticks:

1. Do not smother the tick in oil, nail polish or petroleum jelly and do not use heat to make the tick detach from the skin.
2. Remove the tick ASAP. Use tweezers to gently grasp it near its head or mouth, as close to your skin as possible.
3. Pull carefully.
4. Clean the bite area with alcohol, antiseptic or soap and water.
5. Save the tick if possible by placing it in a clean,

dry jar, vial, small Ziploc plastic bag, or other sealed container and keeping it in the freezer. Identification of the tick will help the physician's diagnosis and treatment, since many tick-borne diseases are transmitted only by certain species. If you cannot save the tick, dispose of the live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

6. See a doctor if you have been bitten by a tick and/or experience any of the symptoms listed below. Taking a "wait and see" approach to deciding whether to treat the disease has risks. Show your doctor every rash and don't assume that you can't have Lyme disease if you don't get a rash.

Get tested: The chances of contracting an infection from a tick increase with the amount of time it is attached to your body. It's important to remove the tick as soon as possible and check your skin around the bite area and monitor your overall health to see if symptoms develop. You should consult a health care practitioner. Health care practitioners may be able to diagnose Lyme disease from symptoms, but lab testing can be an important part of diagnosis and

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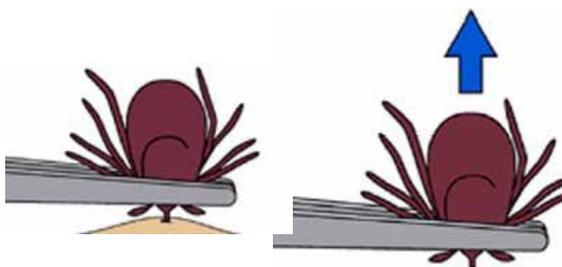


Image source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Lyme Disease Basics, con't

treatment. The most common confirmatory test for Lyme is called the Western Blot and it measures antibodies to the bacteria, which may not be detected by the test for several weeks. Some labs may only test for one strain of bacteria that causes Lyme, however, there are several strains in our area. Tests are not always accurate so it's important to have good communication with your doctor to best care for your health problems.

Symptoms: Once the bacteria are multiplying in the human, they can cause disease. Initially, a patient with Lyme disease may notice a small red spot in the area of the tick bite. After a few days, an additional red ring may surround the red spot, giving the appearance of a bull's eye. Some individuals may never even realize that they have received a bite and not everyone develops the rash.

This illness also causes headaches, fatigue, fever and body aches. The symptoms are very similar to other illnesses making Lyme disease difficult to diagnose at an early stage. If it is not diagnosed early, symptoms progress causing:

- joint pain and swelling
- shooting pain or numbness in limbs
- sleep disturbances
- memory problems
- loss of muscle tone in the face called Bell's Palsy
- dizziness
- arthritis
- severe headaches
- irregular heartbeat
- swollen lymph nodes
- cognitive defects

Treatment: Individuals with suspected or confirmed cases of Lyme disease will be treated aggressively with antibiotics. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some individuals may still experience chronic Lyme symptoms after receiving antibiotics. This is called Post-treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome, or PTLDS. There is currently research being conducted on the best options of treatment for chronic Lyme sufferers.

Prevention: The best prevention of Lyme disease is to avoid tick bites. Ticks tend to live in leafy debris, wooded areas, and tall grasses, however in Ithaca people have found ticks on them after being in downtown parks and backyards.

- Avoid deer, mice, coyotes, and any other animal known to carry blacklegged ticks.
- Remember to protect yourself from ticks by using insect repellents containing 20% DEET or natural repellents like Citronella or Lemon Grass, wearing long sleeves, and long pants. It is best to tuck pant legs into tall socks.
- Once you return home, check yourself and pets for the presence of ticks, paying close attention to skin folds, armpit and groin regions and the scalp. It is also recommended to shower immediately after returning home to wash away any ticks that were missed before they begin feeding.

For more information visit: www.cdc.gov/lyme

Kari Brossard Stoops, Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology, is an Ithaca College Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Physical Education and volunteers on Ithaca Health Alliance's Community Health Education Committee. ❖



SPECIAL THANKS TO 15 STEPS

...for donating 10% of all sales made on December 14, 2013! Said 15 STEPS owners Ken Jupiter and Bettsie Park, after their one-day fundraiser for the Ithaca Free Clinic, "The Ithaca Health Alliance is an incredibly important asset for this community. There is so much need for IHA's services. We are happy to do our part to keep those services in place. We continue to give our support and service to this community because this community has given both of us so very much." ❖

SPOTLIGHT ON: Ithaca Health Alliance Services Helpful for Lyme Disease:

by **Rob Brown, Administrative Coordinator**

Ithaca Health Alliance programs include many services that can be helpful if you have, or may have been exposed to, Lyme Disease. At **Ithaca Free Clinic** you can see a doctor free of charge if you don't have health insurance. The doctor can talk to you about your symptoms (bring your preserved tick if you have one), and recommend next steps for care. Free Clinic doctors can order Lyme Titres (the test for the disease), interpret the results, and prescribe antibiotics or other appropriate drugs. You may be able to get the drugs for free from one of our partner programs (like Urgent Rx from United Way and the Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County).

Through **the Ithaca Health Fund**, you can receive financial aid for treatment of Lyme Disease. The Fund's Diagnostic Grants can pay for some Lyme Titres ordered at the Free Clinic. Health Fund financial advocates can help you apply for help with the cost of other medicines, or bills you may have from a hospital or doctor's office, and the Fund's Treatment Grants for Complementary Care can pay for traditional Chinese herbal medicines recommended by an acupuncturist for treatment of Lyme symptoms. The first Treatment Grant recipient after we re-launched the Fund in 2013 was for a patient who had chronic symptoms after contracting Lyme years ago that were helped only by acupuncture and Chinese herbs.

Community Health Education co-sponsored two events in the spring that focused on Lyme Disease. Read more in the recap section. Stay on the lookout for more Community Health Education resources about Lyme. We'll have more information in future issues of this newsletter (also see the article from the

fall 2011 issue at www.ithacahealth.org/newsletter.html), and we plan on more workshops and partnerships in the future. Email office@ithacahealth.org if you want to join our news-only mailing list and get the latest about what's going on.

Don't have health insurance?

Come to the Ithaca Free Clinic to speak with a doctor or nurse. Walk-in hours are Mondays from 2-6pm and Thursdays from 4-8pm (first come, first served). See full hours, below.

Can't afford holistic care for managing Lyme Disease symptoms?

Call Ithaca Free Clinic at 607-330-1254 (or stop in) to schedule an appointment for free herbal medicine, acupuncture, nutrition, energy work, counseling (need to see a doctor first), occupational therapy, massage therapy and more! Ithaca Free Clinic is located at 521 W. Seneca Street (between Corn and Meadow Street). There is no residency requirement for Clinic services.

IHA is able to provide support for those with Lyme Disease through our current services and educational efforts. All services and programs are free. ❖

ITHACA FREE CLINIC Hours and Operations

Mondays: 2 – 6 p.m. (walk-ins to MDs, appointments for holistic and specialty providers)
Tuesdays: 3 – 7 p.m. (by appointment only)
Thursdays: 4 – 8 p.m. (walk-ins to MDs, appointments for holistic and specialty providers)
Located at 521 West Seneca Street, Ithaca, NY.
607-330-1254
The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the **Ithaca Health Alliance**.

The IHA was founded in 1997. Our mission is to facilitate access to health care for all, with a focus on the needs of the un- and under-insured.

Bethany J. Schroeder

Volunteers of the Quarter

Mary Bowers

(Winter 2014)

Mary Bowers, from Endicott, NY, is a graduate of Ithaca College. Mary brought her passion about issues related to health and accessibility, her original field research with college students with disabilities, and her own experience with a physical disability to planning for and presenting at IHA's Summer 2014 Volunteer Training on Cultural Sensitivity, where she spoke about the role that disability can play in shaping a person's experience both in and outside a medical setting.

Mary first became interested in the Ithaca Free Clinic through a Biology of Poverty course she took in 2011. Mary chose the IHA/IFC for her service project and the rest is history! Since then, Mary has been involved with organizing two benefit concerts for the IFC, planning an IFC First Friday Gallery Night, working in the clinic with patient discharge, promoting our services at community events, and advertising health education programs.

Mary said her experiences with the IHA have taught her a lot about how non-profits work and on a personal level "I have really enjoyed getting to know people at the clinic, including Andrea, Rob and all the volunteers – it's amazing that everything runs so well...I love the respect that all the volunteers and employees show towards the patients."

Mary is eager to use her real world experiences at the IHA in graduate school and beyond as she continues toward on the path of promoting social change.

Thank you, Mary Bowers! ❖



Sue Mueller

(Fall 2013)

Sue Mueller has lived in Ithaca since 2003 and has been involved in local agriculture for most of this time. As co-founder of Fingerlakes Fruit Bowl, she contributed to fundraisers to support Healthy Food for All (a collaboration of Cornell Cooperative Extension and area farms to provide subsidized farm shares for low-income families), the vegetable program at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School, and Hospicare. Her experience sparked a passion for health promotion, and she graduated from Tompkins Cortland Community College with a nursing degree in 2013. IHA's Ithaca Free Clinic was the first place where she wanted to work. She dove into the volunteer team with vigor, signed up for frequent extra nursing shifts, and earns praise from other health-care professionals and patients alike for her caring demeanor and expertise.

She's always on the lookout for untreated chronic illness – especially diabetes; Sue's passionate about diabetes – and goes out of her way to make sure people can access the ongoing care and resources that they need. She says her motto "might as well be that we all deserve welcoming and accessible health care, just like we deserve fresh and affordable food."

Thank you, Sue Mueller! ❖

More than 80 percent of IHA's work is completed through volunteer efforts. If you're interested in volunteering, please call the Administrative Coordinator at 607-330-1253 or fill out an application online, available at www.ithacahealth.org.



Try this Lime Cilantro Dressing!

By Monica Arambulo

Makes 3 cups

Ingredients:

3 limes, juiced
 1 large bunch cilantro (1 cup chopped),
 the fresher the better
 ¼ teaspoon dried basil
 1 teaspoon salt
 ¼-½ teaspoon pepper
 1 cup olive oil (any kind is okay,
 but olive oil is healthier)

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients except cilantro in a jar or bottle
2. Chop cilantro and add last
3. Put a cap on and shake vigorously until mixed
4. Pour over a salad

Monica likes to mix lettuce leaves, tomatoes, and cucumbers with some chopped apples or pears, and sometimes with chopped orange segments. ❖

LOCAL ARTISTS...

are encouraged to email outreach@ithacahealth.org if interested in hanging their work at the Ithaca Health Alliance and Free Clinic.

Thank You, Health Allies!

FOUNDATIONS

- Kinney Drugs Foundation
- Ithaca Rotary Community Grants
- Tom & Maria Eisner Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, in memory of Thomas Eisner
- First Unitarian Society
- Park Foundation
- United Way Ithaca College Student Philanthropy
- Cornell University Community Partnership Board
- Legacy Foundation
- Social Service League of Ithaca
- Vector Magnetics Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County
- Women's Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County

BUSINESS SUPPORTERS

- 15 STEPS
- Aigen Financial
- Barry's House LLC
- Felicia's Atomic Lounge
- Jabberwock
- Northeast School of Botanical medicine
- Mountain Rose Herbs

Business Supporters who participated in Give Thanks for Health Care

- GreenStar Co-operative Market
- Autumn Leaves Used Book Store
- Cellar d'Or Wine and Cider
- LiSalon
- Rhine House
- Stonecat Café
- The Movie Poster Store
- T-Shirt Express

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

- Many contributors to the Dr. Louis Munchmeyer Memorial Fund
- Many individual donors

RECAP:

“LYME DISEASE: PATIENT AND PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES”

by Brooke Hansen

The IHA and Ithaca College collaborated on two very successful events educating about acute and chronic Lyme Disease. On February 27, 2014, a packed house came to see the film *Under Our Skin* (<http://www.underourskin.com/>) at Cinemapolis to learn more about the controversies surrounding chronic Lyme and to support the Ithaca Free Clinic with donations that brought in \$800. The inspiration behind the event came from the many people in the local community, including those at Ithaca College, who were initially undiagnosed with Lyme or are having post-treatment issues. The film features the political and economic controversies surrounding chronic Lyme and includes those who were misdiagnosed, refused health insurance and have subsequently faced

many health challenges, some of them debilitating. Michael O’Sullivan of the Washington Post reported that the film is “like a well-made thriller, gets under your skin...More deeply terrifying than any slasher film you’ll ever see.”

The follow up event on March 18th at the Tompkins County Library, Lyme Disease: Let’s Talk About It, also had standing room only attendance as patients, health care professionals, parents and concerned community members came to hear from a panel of diverse practitioners about how we can best prevent and treat chronic Lyme. Deanna Berman (naturopath), 7Song (herbalist), Jen Mutolo (acupuncturist), and Ronald Stram (M.D. chronic disease specialist) shared what they have learned regarding testing, treatment and complications of Lyme Disease.

Following the panel, the event offered an open space for all to hear the powerful stories from the audience which included people who have had debilitating symptoms and others who are coping with their entire families having chronic Lyme. There was a facilitated brainstorming activity to collect possible next steps that community members can work on. Some of the key points and recommendations that emerged from this discussion among practitioners and community members include:

- Empower local Lyme support groups
- Organize more film showings and panels of Lyme sufferers
- Develop more localized education and information, including signage in areas known to be infested with ticks (even in downtown areas such as Dewitt Park)
- Encourage the health department and other agencies to start a task force
- Protect doctors providing treatment and report those that are not to the health department
- Organize a conference with Lyme literate MDs and other expert practitioners
- Promote integrative health care as the most effective option for chronic Lyme – especially for those with complex symptoms and intensive antibiotic treatments
- Publicize the labs that give the most comprehensive and accurate results
- Understand the role of Lyme in multiple chronic infectious disease syndrome (MCIDS)

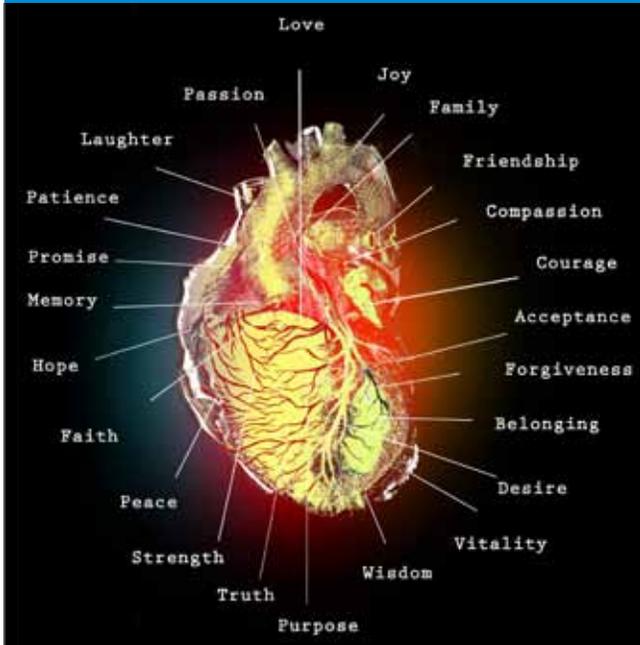
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poster design: Tamara Beardsley

SPECIAL THANKS TO GreenStar Co-op West-End & Oasis ...

... for raising \$4,000 through the “Give Thanks for Health Care” register fundraiser in November of 2013! We appreciate all the help from the general manager, front-end managers and floor staff! ❖



THANK YOU TO Ryan B. Curtis

... for sharing his heart design with the Ithaca Health Alliance! We used this beautiful heart on our cards at the Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair. We have more cards available to recognize a donation made in someone's honor (let us know where to send it). This design is also available on a T-shirt through his website. Visit www.aquariusdreams.com to see his new pieces and children's book in process! The book "You've got the UNIVERSE in your hands" celebrates the awesome miracle of being alive in this conscious, loving universe! ❖

The IHA will continue to collect information useful to the community on Lyme Disease. Consider these:

- The Lyme Disease Association (www.Lymediseaseassociation.org/) has many useful materials, including videos for children.
- Becca Harber, herbalist and educator, assisted by Deanna Berman, N.D., taught Lyme Disease: Prevention & Care, Part 1 at GreenStar Co-op. Downloadable handouts and a recording of the class can be found at ithacafingerlakes.com/tag/becca-harber/

If you'd like to get involved, contact Brooke Hansen. Brooke is an IHA Education Volunteer, Medical Anthropologist and Chair of Ithaca College's Department of Anthropology. In addition to being a point person for the above listed possible next steps, she is also organizing a local study of chronic Lyme by collecting the stories of those in Tompkins County who have been afflicted. By documenting experiences of people living in our community we can better meet the challenges of chronic Lyme. If you are interested in participating, contact kbhansen@ithaca.edu or 607-274-1735. ❖

Join Us and Make a Difference!

Are you a healthcare provider and interested in donating your time and services? The Ithaca Free Clinic is recruiting:

- Acupuncturists
- Nurses
- Chiropractors
- Nurse Practitioners
- Doctors
- Physician Assistants
- Massage Therapists

We welcome individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. Malpractice insurance provided for MD, NP, PA, RN & licensed therapists; and possible for Chiropractors & Acupuncturists.

To apply, stop in or complete our online application www.ithacahealth.org/ally ❖





Ithaca Health Alliance

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Find us online at

www.ithacahealth.org



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**Late Summer 2014 •
Lyme Disease • Volunteers of the
Quarter • Lime Cilantro Dressing**