

Lyme Myths

Myth: Lyme-infected ticks only live in rural parts of Canada.

Truth: Lyme disease is present in most of Canada. Although Lyme infection is more common in rural areas, residents that live in urban areas are also at risk for infection. It is the migratory birds, robins and song sparrows etc. that bring this disease in each season.

Myth: Chronic Lyme Disease will go away on its own over time.

Truth: There is no evidence to suggest Lyme disease clears the body without treatment. In fact, the opposite research exists.

Myth: You can't contract Lyme disease in the winter.

Truth: An average Deer Tick lives for two years and can survive in very cold climates. Although infection rates drop in the winter – primarily because people spend less time outdoors - it's still possible to contract Lyme.

Myth: All Lyme victims develop a "bull's eye" rash.

Truth: Although rashes are fairly common, only 30% of Lyme patients report experiencing a rash, and only 9% develop the classic "bull's eye" rash.

Myth: There's no reason to treat Chronic Lyme Disease since people don't get much better.

Truth: Nothing could be farther from the truth. Most people can return to work and carry on with few limitations on their lifestyle. Lyme disease remains one of the most treatable of chronic illnesses.

Myth: I was tested for Lyme disease at the provincial lab and the results were negative. I guess that means I can't have Lyme.

Truth: Actually, that's untrue. Evidence suggests that Canada's Lyme testing methods are flawed. False negative test results are common, especially in the early stages of Lyme. It takes time for antibodies to develop, so early tests often miss the bacteria. Contrary to bureaucratic statements, late stage Lyme disease antibody testing is much less accurate.

Myth: Lyme disease testing has a 'gold standard' in Canada.

Truth: There is no universally accepted test for Lyme disease. Every lab test has its advantages and disadvantages, but overall Lyme tests in Canada are largely flawed. Other labs recommended by CanLyme are all certified and accredited, run by PH.D's who simply refuse to follow flawed testing protocol. Canada has no mechanism for better testing due to bureaucratic controls that are influenced by for-profit players, and not victims and their experts.

Lyme is known for antigenic shifting, so antibody testing isn't always effective.

PCR tissue and fluids tests are available for various tissue. A positive PCR is highly accurate. A negative PCR only tells the scientist that they did not find evidence in that sample. Another sample from the same patient from a different location may be positive.

Myth: If the patient doesn't look sick, they can't have Lyme disease.

Truth: As with other illnesses, it's possible to be very ill and outwardly look fine. Very low energy levels, neurologic and brain dysfunction don't often change a person's appearance. Family and friends are sometimes hard on victims simply because they don't look sick.

Myth: Lyme disease is the 'disease du jour'.

Truth: Not true. Lyme is a serious illness and ignoring this endemic issue will lead to more chronic illness with all the emotional and economic costs involved.