

Lyme Disease: A True Modern-Day Pandemic ~ Part 2

NLND HEALTH PEARL #7

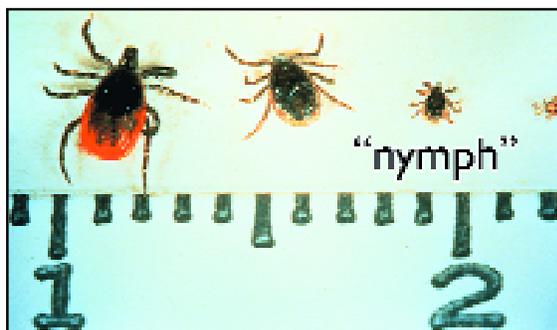
Jacobus Hollewijn with
guest, Dr. Robin Thomson

In our last issue, we opened the topic of Lyme Disease and discussed its dangers and prominence, even here in Montana. We highlighted the work of Dr. Robin Thomson, new to the Bozeman area, and a recent guest on my radio health-talk show. In this installment, we bring Dr. Thomson back to discuss the prevention and treatment of Lyme Disease.

Dr. Thomson now practices naturopathic medicine at Gallatin Valley Natural Medicine. She is a Lyme-literate naturopathic doctor and combines conventional and integrative approaches to treat tick-born illnesses. She is a member of the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society (ILADS) and has completed the ILADS training program under the mentorship of Dr. Bernard Raxlen in New York City... Take it away, Robin!

As outlined in the last issue, Lyme disease is caused by transmission of a spiral-shaped bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, by a deer tick. The disease can cause a host of debilitating symptoms, including joint and muscle pain, fatigue, and foggy thinking. Long-term, untreated infection can invade the nervous system and cause more severe problems that can resemble Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, or even bipolar disorder.

Although Montana has had practically no cases of Lyme infection reported in previous years, so far in 2009, in Gallatin County alone, we have a reported 9 cases—and tick season has barely begun. In my practice in Bozeman



Deer tick: The one third from the left is a deer-tick nymph, which is the most "infectious" stage of life. Notice how small it is...

since February, I have seen an average of two to four newly diagnosed cases per week.

Protecting Against Tick Bites: Prevention is the Best Medicine

Although several types of ticks transmit Lyme disease, the most common are deer ticks (also called black-legged ticks). These ticks are tiny: as small as the period on the end of this sentence. Many people have never seen one, not because they aren't present, but because they're so small. They like to sit on the top of grass-stalks and "hitch hike" onto passing animals and people, looking for a blood meal. Deer ticks prefer some moisture, and are more plentiful near streams, rivers, and on the edges of tree stands.

The safe, natural way to protect against ticks is to use a eucalyptus-containing herbal insect repellent on skin, clothes, and pets. Wearing light-colored clothing (to see small ticks better), and tucking pants into socks pants (to prevent ticks from climbing directly onto skin) can also help. Avoid leaning up against trees, or sitting with your back against a tree. And always check yourself and your children for ticks after spending time out-of-doors.

For people who do a lot of camping and hiking locally or who are traveling to Lyme-endemic areas (West coast, East Coast, or Minnesota/Wisconsin) during tick season (May through October) I recommend using herbs internally to prevent Lyme infection in a case of a bite. I use daily doses of a combination of Samento (concentrated cat's claw), Andrographis, and Astragalus for immune stimulation and direct anti-Lyme effects.

Early treatment leads to the best outcomes. Be suspicious of flu-like symptoms in the summer, or new joint pain and fatigue. Get preventive treatment for a known deer-tick bite. And remember that you don't need a rash to have Lyme disease (only 30–40% of people do).

Treatment: Where Holistic Medicine Shines

While Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria, simply killing the bugs with medication is almost never enough. I have seen the best results by combining antibiotics with natural medicines and lifestyle changes to address the immune dysfunction, inflammation, hormone imbalances and other dysfunctions created by the Lyme spirochetes.

Many body systems need to be addressed in most people with Lyme infection. Lyme disease is often complicated by coinfections with other bacteria transmitted by deer ticks such as Bartonella, Erlichia, and Mycoplasma, as well as parasites such as Babesia, which require additional treatment. There are often hormone imbalances, especially thyroid and adrenal deficiencies. Sleep issues and pain issues can be major problems. Nutritional deficiencies (especially B12 and vitamin D), infections of the gut with parasites or *Helicobacter pylori*, food intolerances (especially gluten), viral infections, yeast overgrowth, heavy metal overload, and brain chemistry imbalances (low serotonin or endorphins, in particular) are common.

These complexities require multifaceted treatment beyond just antibiotics to beat the infection. In my office, antimicrobials are used, both pharmaceutical and herbal, along with systemic enzymes (for reducing inflammation and for breaking up clumps of bacteria). Herbal antivirals, heavy metal chelators, nutritional support (via intravenous methods or orally), herbal and nutritional immune stimulants (reishi and maitake mushrooms, for example), bioidentical hormones, and

amino acids (for mood and neurotransmitter imbalances) are common treatment adjuncts. A clean, low-sugar diet, a vigorous exercise program (as soon as the patient is able), and regular visits to the sauna or hot tub are vitally important as well.

Addressing the widespread effects of Lyme and its coinfections on the body allows healing to ensue. ■

Dr. Thomson's website is www.natfamillymed.com, and she can be reached at Gallatin Valley Natural Medicine, 406-587-0858.



Jacobus is not a doctor and does not intend to diagnose, treat or cure any disorder. The information is based on self-study, interviewing experts on his weekly 3-hour Sunday morning Radio Program "Gesundheit! With Jacobus," which runs from 7-10 am, on AM 1450-KMMS and AM 1340 KPRK, and on feedback received from retail customers visiting his dietary supplements retail store Gesundheit! Nutrition Center at 2855 N. 19th Avenue, Suite N, in Bozeman (585-4668). If in doubt please visit a professional of your own choice and/or educate yourself with available published materials.

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