

## One Personal Account of Lyme Disease

I have been a gardener for 15 years. During that time, I have had Lyme disease 3 times, one currently. Fortunately, the first 2 times presented with the bull's eye rash that may or may not show up after a bite. This third time, there was no rash, though I had, indeed, been bitten, more times this year than all other years as a gardener combined. I was tired but had been working hard in the hot weather. I was having joint and muscle pains but put that also off to hard work. And then one day I just knew something was wrong...I was sick. I went to the Walk In Clinic in Wainscot and after consultation with Dr Kerr, got on a course of antibiotic.

When I went to The Time for Lyme seminar on August 19 at The Bay Street Theatre, I learned that what had transpired for me was the appropriate course of activity: I had listened to my body and the Dr had listened to me. Diagnosing Lyme reliably with any test, at this time, is so impossible that the doctors at the seminar all said the diagnosis must be clinical. In the absence of sure signs like a bulls eye rash, the doctor must ask appropriate questions and the patient must reply with thoughtful and careful reflection of their symptoms.

And I learned much more. There are many more tick borne diseases than I knew. There are many forms of the bacteria that cause Lyme .A tick bite can deliver more than one disease in that one bite. One may be bitten and not even be aware of the bite. A tick bite can cause diseases worse than Lyme. The symptoms can be confusing and disguise themselves as other conditions or diseases. Ticks live in our yards, at the beach in the woods: all those places we love to be in the summer. They are so small and like to bite us in such discreet places that they are hard to find. They can infect our pets and be brought into the house on them and then fall off onto the carpet or floor.

Am I trying to frighten you? Yes, enough to make you aware that tick born disease is a real concern in this area and the rates of infection are increasing .What to do? The most important thing to do is inform yourself. Time for Lyme has a very good website (<http://www.timeforlyme.org>) with great information and good links. They also highly recommend self-advocating. If you feel flu-like symptoms that don't really behave like the flu, you may have Lyme. If you get a very high fever suddenly, you may have one of the other tick borne diseases and should seek medical help immediately. If you feel you may have Lyme and go to a doctor but do not receive the kind of attention you feel you need, speak up or go to another doctor. When you call, ask if this Dr knows about Lyme. Persist.....

And here are the more optimistic things I learned. There are ways to protect one's self. I spray my clothes and some exposed areas of the body every day before I go into the garden. I have my loved one help me check myself every day at the end of the day. I pay close attention to aches and pains to evaluate their cause. The medical community, both Doctors and researchers are learning more about these diseases and doing research to find vaccines and better diagnostic tools. There are landscape design and maintenance possibilities that can help reduce ticks in your yard. There are ways to protect your pets. There are spray programs and other pesticide possibilities to help reduce the population in your yard. And, most importantly, there are groups like Time for Lyme that are informing the public, sponsoring research, monitoring and sponsoring legislation for research and establishing support groups.

The seminar, for me, accomplished its mission. It informed me and it told me to inform myself. Inform yourself about this increasingly prevalent disease and the diseases that can come from a tick bite. Start with the Time for Lyme website: <http://www.timeforlyme.org>