

Lyme, Not Lime: How to Help Those Wrestling With the Bizarre Disease

“L-Y-M-E” not “L-I-M-E” an exasperated college friend explained to a group of us in his dorm room. “It’s carried by ticks, and apparently a tick bite I had years ago transmitted it to me.”

If you’re like myself or anyone else in the room that day, then you probably would’ve been just as confused as we were.

Since that time, I’ve encountered other people fighting Lyme as well. So why has this seemingly new disease become such an epidemic?

A recent [Medium article](#) sheds some light. It explains that ticks are not only growing in population, but are also “becoming more malignant, more aggressive, and more likely to carry infection.”

The article goes further to explain:

“Lyme can be difficult to diagnose. To identify it, doctors generally rely on symptoms (the bull’s-eye rash) and circumstances (having been in a tick-infested area) rather than a blood test because the antibodies that indicate the presence of the disease can take weeks to appear in tests, resulting in false negatives. The lack of a reliable test means people often go untreated longer than necessary.”

My friend’s experience matches this. He elaborates:

“I was ten when I got the bullseye rash. The doctor notes from the record indicated her suspicion of Lyme, but she told us it was a spider bite and gave us low dose antibiotics. [I] didn’t get diagnosed until age 20 after years of doctors scratching

their heads. Many doctors were uneducated at the time or afraid to diagnose it for reasons that are unclear. There is growing awareness but still a lot of ignorance in the medical community.”

It is not only the medical community who have been ignorant in diagnosing the disease. Family and friends have a hard time visualizing the symptoms of Lyme, and thus have a difficulty understanding the true debilitating nature of the illness.

The article from *Medium* elaborates: “It’s hard for them to have a perspective on the real impact of Lyme disease because it doesn’t cause visible changes. People with Lyme disease don’t look sick.”

Again, my friend confirms:

“Lyme is life-threatening. At my worst I struggled with limited mobility, fatigue, memory loss, feelings of social isolation, slurring words, tremors, joint pain, headaches, the list goes on. Oversensitivity to alcohol: I have half a Bud Light and I’m smashed. It’s such a bizarre disease.”

Due to the interior nature of the symptoms of Lyme, many doubt the extent of the debilitation. This results in feelings of social isolation as one simply does not have the energy to partake in everyday leisure.

The *Medium* article further posits:

“Some people’s symptoms can leave them in pain for months or years, and the lack of effective treatments and skepticism among some people that their condition is real can leave people feeling anxious and depressed.”

With this in mind, I asked my friend the following question:

What is your advice to those who have family and friends with Lyme?

He responded:

“Don’t always ask them about their health, engage them in topics that interest them, so they can get excited about something and forget their issues for a bit. Lyme is just one more opportunity to show love to someone who needs it, who is a human just like you, except they are probably a little more tired, and may not remember what you told them about your golden retriever two weeks ago.”

Lyme hides in plain sight, both in the ticks that carry it, and the people who suffer from it. For those of us who have friends and family with Lyme, we can do our part by understanding it, and by default, them, better.

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[Image Credit: Jerzy Gorecki via [Pixabay](#)]