

NEW MILFORD HOSPITAL

CAMPUS OF DANBURY HOSPITAL



THE WEEKLY PAGE OF WELLNESS INFORMATION PROVIDED BY YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL

Lyme Disease: New Insights, New Discoveries

The Western Connecticut Health Network (WCHN) Biomedical Research Institute has launched an innovative, multidisciplinary initiative to better understand the mysteries of Lyme disease. The initiative, called the WCHN Lyme Disease Research Program, is utilizing proprietary technology and cutting-edge research to study this poorly understood disease.



Biomedical Lyme disease research

The goal of discovering better testing, diagnosis, and treatment of Lyme disease is already closer to reality at the Research Institute, where scientists are using cutting-edge technology to develop new methods and testing to help simplify diagnosis and monitoring of Lyme disease.

Research Institute scientists have already developed a method for detecting the Lyme disease infection in blood, using a novel technology that concentrates Lyme disease-causing bacteria in a blood sample. The Research Institute team is also developing an ultra-sensitive test to detect the DNA of Lyme disease-causing bacteria directly in the blood.

What is the Lyme Disease Registry?

Initiated largely through philanthropy, the WCHN Lyme Disease Registry is the first hospital-based Lyme disease registry in the nation to focus interdisciplinary research on the impact of Lyme disease. This landmark research project is aimed at building an increasingly robust database of information gathered from individuals diagnosed with Lyme disease.

Through the pairing of extensive clinical data with participant blood samples, researchers at the Research Institute are able to analyze similarities and differences among patients to gain a greater understanding of the course of disease, how people are affected, and the causes of persistent symptoms. The community-based participatory nature of our research draws on the unique strengths of varied clinicians, researchers, and patients, both within the WCHN system and throughout the nation.

More participants means more progress

The more data the registry acquires, the more robust its research efforts can be. Those who have been diagnosed with Lyme disease by a health care provider, and are at least 5 years old, may be able to participate in this study. Registration is free and completely confidential. Participation involves answering a series of questions, having a small amount of blood drawn for Lyme disease-related testing, and completing a follow-up form every six months. If you are interested in participating, contact the Lyme Disease Registry at (203) 739-8383 for more information.

For more information on how to support the WCHN Lyme Disease Research Program contact the WCHN Foundation at (203) 739-7227.

Living in “Lyme Country”



It’s estimated that every year, nearly 300,000 people in the United States will be diagnosed with Lyme disease, a disease transmitted by a virtually unnoticeable tick species that often travels on deer. As Connecticut residents we are no stranger to these tiny bacterium carrying ticks. We live in the heart of Lyme disease country with more than 22,000 residents being diagnosed with Lyme disease each year.

Keeping ticks away

Deer ticks are most active in the warmer months from April through September. However, regardless of the time of year, it’s important to take precautions to keep ticks away when outdoors-particularly if you are going to be in or near the woods, long grass, brush, or gardening.

Here are some tips to keep you protected:

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, pants, and closed-toe shoes. Tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Dress in light colors so ticks stand out and you are more likely to notice them.
- Keep long hair tied back.
- Stick to the center of trails-avoid going into the tall grass, woods, etc.
- Apply insect repellent containing at least 20% DEET to clothes and exposed skin.
- Do a full-body tick-check (on yourself, children, and pets) after being outdoors. Ticks can attach to any part of the body but prefer body creases. Therefore, pay close attention to the ears, back of the neck, armpits, scalp, groin, and back of the knees.
- A shower and shampoo may help remove crawling ticks.
- After returning home, spin clothes in the dryer for at least 20 minutes on high heat

to kill any unseen ticks.

Deer ticks can be as small as the periods in this paragraph. That’s why it’s particularly important to check for ticks after coming indoors.

If you spot a tick, remove it immediately with fine-tipped tweezers. Be sure to grasp the tick close to the skin and steadily pull upward to avoid crushing the tick’s body. Thoroughly clean the bite area with soap and water after removing the tick. If a rash forms or you experience any symptoms (see below), call your doctor. Even if you don’t discover a tick on your skin, remain alert for any signs and symptoms of Lyme disease.

Signs and symptoms

The early symptoms of Lyme disease can be mild and easily overlooked. If bitten by one of these infected ticks, you may experience flu-like symptoms that can include a stiff neck, chills, fever, swollen lymph nodes, headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, and joint pain. You may also

experience a large red spot that expands over a period of days or weeks forming a circular rash resembling a bull’s-eye. If left untreated, the bacterium travels through the bloodstream causing more serious symptoms like these:

- Arthritis- typically in the knee
- Meningitis- which causes neck stiffness and severe headaches
- Heart rhythm irregularities
- Facial paralysis
- Shooting pains, numbness and tingling in the hands and feet

Treatment

Doctors typically prescribe antibiotics for treatment. If diagnosed in the early stages, many people will recover after a round of oral antibiotics. However, for some people, whether diagnosed at later stages of the disease or if initially misdiagnosed, treatment approaches vary.

Keeping Your Joints Healthy

Many of us don’t think twice about jumping out of bed to start our day. We don’t have any achy joints that prevent us from going for a long walk or a run. However, a life without joint pain is a luxury for some people. For those with damaged or diseased joints simply getting out of bed can be painful.

Wear and tear on our joints increases as we age-especially if we carry too much weight, injure ourselves, or have poor posture. The best way to care for our joints is to keep them, along with our muscles, ligaments, and bones, strong and stable. Here are some ways to protect your joints for years to come:

Stay active

Exercise helps keep joints flexible and strong and may reduce joint swelling. It can also help you maintain a healthy weight or shed a few extra pounds. An easy way to stay active is to go for a walk each day. Strive for a daily 20-or 30-minute walk. Bicycling and swimming are other fun, joint-friendly exercises. Other range-of-motion exercises, like dancing, can help relieve joint stiffness and increase flexibility.

Maintain a healthy weight

Excess weight can put stress on your joints, especially the knees, hips, back, and feet. It can also increase the wear and tear on the joints. Keeping your weight within a healthy range is the best thing you can do for your joints. Losing weight reduces pressure on joints and helps prevent joint injury. Research has shown that with every pound gained, a person puts four times more stress on the knees.

Eat a healthy diet

Eating right can nourish your joints. Strive to eat foods rich in calcium, antioxidants, and vitamins C and D. Aim to get enough

protein as well. Here are some foods you may want to incorporate into your diet: Yogurt; Broccoli; Kale; Figs; Oranges; Lean meats; Seafood; Beans and legumes; Nuts; Almond milk

Avoid injuries

Always wear proper protective gear to help prevent injuries while at play and work, and for activities that require repetitive movements, like kneeling or squatting. Serious or even minor injuries can damage cartilage and can lead to long-term joint problems. Before a workout, be sure to warm up with gentle movements to get your body ready.

And don’t forget to listen to your body. Exercise should challenge you, but it shouldn’t cause lasting pain. If you’re injured, don’t ignore the pain- seek medical attention. Know your limits. Certain exercises might just be too much for your joints to handle. Go slow and modify exercises that cause you discomfort.

Build strong muscles and core

Strong muscles support your joints. Without enough muscle, your joints take a pounding. Weight training exercises help build muscle and keep surrounding ligaments strong preventing the joints from having to do all the work. Be sure your exercise routine includes activities that strengthen the core. Stronger abdominal and back muscles will help you keep your balance and prevent falls that can damage your joints. Always use good form when exercising to be sure you reduce the risk of injury.

Stand tall

Remember when your mother used to tell you to stand up straight? She was right. Slouching is not good for your joints. Standing and sitting up straight can protect

all the joints from your neck down to your knees.

Seek help

If you’re not getting the relief you need from joint pain, speak with your doctor. Your doctor may recommend certain treatments or over-the-counter or prescription medications to help you. Perhaps joint replacement is right for you.

Are you ready of a life without joint pain?

Should you need joint replacement, look no further than Western Connecticut Health Network. There is no better place for joint replacement care in the state. Our multidisciplinary team of orthopedic experts will guide you through the joint replacement process, before, during, and after surgery. Call (800) 585-7198 for more information.

Health Talk Aired on Comcast Channel 23

every Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m.



The 30-minute show covers advancements in health care, health issues, and wellness topics.

Tune in the week of June 7 for the Community Health Improvement “Health Lifestyle Initiative” featuring community partner guests Theresa Argondezzi, MPH, CHES, CPH, Health Educator, Norwalk Health Department and Mary Ann Genuario, Health and Fitness Director, Riverbrook Regional YMCA.