



Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI)

What is STARI?

Persons in the southeastern and south central states, including Oklahoma, have reported having a “bull’s-eye” rash that is typically seen in persons with the early stages of Lyme disease. However, testing for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease is negative. This “Lyme-like” disease has been named STARI. The cause of this disease is not fully understood yet.

How do you get STARI?

It is often thought that *Borrelia lonestari* is the bacteria responsible for infection in humans passed by a tick bite; however, there is not enough evidence to confirm this. It is important to know this illness is caused by a bite from an infected lone star tick. Preventing tick bites will help prevent STARI.

What are the symptoms of STARI?

The symptoms of STARI are similar to the early symptoms of Lyme disease. A large bull’s-eye shaped rash and mild symptoms of fever, tiredness, headache, and muscle/joint pains have been reported. Persons may or may not recall being bitten by a tick in the previous two to three weeks prior to symptom onset date.

What is the testing and treatment for STARI?

Persons with a bull’s-eye rash should seek care from their physician. Since the cause of STARI is still considered unknown, no commercial lab tests have been developed to detect infection in humans. Therefore, diagnosis is generally based on symptoms (including rash), as well as a patient’s geographic location in the United States. It is still unknown whether antibiotic treatment is beneficial for those who are diagnosed with STARI, but your physician may prescribe antibiotics to treat STARI. You do not need to take antibiotics just because a tick bites you. The majority of tick bites will not result in STARI, or other diseases transmitted by ticks.

How do I protect myself from STARI?

The best way to protect yourself from STARI and other tickborne diseases is to prevent tick bites. Personal tick bite prevention precautions include:

- Wear light colored clothing to make ticks easier to see.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into sock to deprive ticks of attachment sites.
- Wear closed-toe shoes, not sandals.
- Hikers and bikers should stay in the center of trails to avoid grass and brush.
- Check for ticks AT LEAST once per day; particularly, along waistbands, in the armpits, and groin area. Don’t forget the back and the hair!
- Use a tick repellent with DEET on skin and clothing according to the directions.
- Use a tick repellent with permethrin ON CLOTHING ONLY as directed by the label.

How should an attached tick be removed?

Since the risk of getting a tickborne illness is higher the longer the tick stays attached, ticks should be removed from your body as quickly as possible. Use tweezers for tick removal, but if these are unavailable, cover your fingers with a tissue (or similar material) and grab the tick as close to the surface of the skin as possible. Then, applying gentle steady traction, pull the tick straight back for removal. Sometimes a small red welt may be present on the skin where the tick was attached. This is usually due to irritation from the tick’s saliva and will usually get better in one to two days.