

# Doctors Change Treatment Recommendations For Lyme Disease

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(Credit: KDKA)

Reporting [Dr. Maria Simbra](#)

PITTSBURGH (KDKA) — Doctors are saying don't wait – treat – because sometimes it can take a while to get diagnosed with Lyme disease.

“So, we do see a number of cases that are delayed in diagnosis because the initial rash is missed or the symptoms are misinterpreted,” says Dr. Andrew Nowalk, an infectious diseases specialist at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

“By the time they get to me, I can see them a month after they've had their first symptoms or a year and a half after they've had their first symptoms.”

Turns out, Lyme infection is becoming more common in our area, with cases surging in the past five years.

“From 10 or 15 kids a year that we see here to almost 150 children last year,” says Dr. Nowalk.

For that reason, infectious diseases doctors at Children's Hospital are recommending antibiotics right away for people bitten by a deer tick.

“Things have changed and I think the recommendation needed to change too,” he adds.

Christine McCullough had Lyme disease last year.

She was treated within 12 hours of finding the tick and credits her doctor for quickly recognizing the rash.

“It had all the bull's eye rings going around it and she immediately put me on antibiotics,” she says. “There was no delay.”

“We're entering prime time for Lyme disease,” cautions Dr. Nowalk. “It's important to make this diagnosis early, because the outcomes of the patients who are treated early are much better than when the patients are treated later on.”

Dr. Nowalk adds according to state testing, 70 percent of the deer ticks in a local county are carrying the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.