

Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI) Q&A

What is STARI?

STARI is a newly emerging tick-borne disease found primarily in the southeastern and south central United States. The etiological agent of STARI is unknown, but may be the bacterium *Borrelia lonestari*. The number of cases per year is unknown because physicians are not required to report cases of STARI to public health, but the disease is thought to be relatively rare.

How is STARI spread?

STARI is spread by the bite of an infected lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Person-to-person transmission of STARI has not been documented.

Who gets STARI?

Anyone who is bitten by an infected tick can get STARI.

What are the symptoms of STARI?

The symptoms of STARI are indistinguishable from those of early Lyme disease. Erythema migrans, a bull's-eye shaped rash, is the most common sign. Some people also experience mild symptoms of fatigue, headache, stiff neck, or fever.

What is the treatment for STARI?

There is no diagnostic test to confirm STARI. If you think you might have STARI, visit your doctor. Your doctor can perform other blood tests to rule out Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, and can prescribe antibiotics like doxycycline as treatment. Ask your doctor about a STARI research study that is being conducted by the CDC.

What can be done to prevent the spread of STARI?

Limiting exposure to ticks is the best way to prevent tick-borne disease. When spending time outdoors in places where contact with ticks may occur, take the following precautions:

- Wear light-colored clothing so that crawling ticks can be easily seen.
- Wear pants and long sleeves to reduce skin exposure to ticks.
- Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants to prevent ticks from crawling up pants legs.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin, and permethrin to clothing.
- After spending time outdoors, thoroughly inspect your body for crawling or attached ticks.





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How should a tick be removed?

To remove an attached tick, grasp with fine-tipped tweezers as close to the skin surface as possible, and pull upward and out with a firm, steady pressure. If tweezers are not available, use fingers shielded with tissue paper or rubber gloves. Do not handle with bare hands. Do not use petroleum jelly, fire, or other home remedies; these methods may actually increase the risk of infection. Be careful not to squeeze, crush, or puncture the tick's body, which may contain infectious fluids. After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite area and wash hands. Consult with a physician if there is concern about incomplete tick removal.

Where can I get additional information about STARI?

Contact the Georgia Department of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch, by e-mail at dph-gaepinfo@dph.ga.gov. The following website may be helpful: CDC Division of Vector-borne Infectious Diseases STARI Fact Sheet at <http://www.cdc.gov/stari/>.

