

NEWSGROUP FAQ'S- Transmission Myths

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Fear, ignorance and Internet rumors have also created an environment for expanding the mythology of Lyme's protean properties far beyond scientific fact or medical observation. For example, a recent spat of Internet postings has suggested that Lyme can be acquired through sexual contact.

"I think that Lyme is also a STD [sexual-transmitted disease]," said one newsgroup poster. Another wrote, "I've talked to many couples who claim they transmitted to each other through sexual contact. I believe I gave it to my wife."

At least one "Lyme specialist" appears to be telling patients that Lyme is sexually transmitted and therefore their family members should be tested. One person reported to Quackwatch that a family member had been tested and told that the test was positive and that a 4-5 month course of antibiotics was necessary.

There is no basis for such advice. The infection is acquired from the bite of an infected tick. People are "dead end" hosts and do not spread Lyme infections to others.

The topic of pregnancy and Lyme is also rife with rumor and unnecessary fear. During a quarter of a century of research and surveillance, there have been no documented cases of mother-child transmission and no cases of fetal injury associated with a Lyme infection. Recent attempts to demonstrate venereal, transplacental and contact transmission of Lyme spirochetes in hamsters have also failed [25]. In contrast, a case of perinatal transmission of human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE) was reported in the New England Journal of Medicine [26]. Like *B. burgdorferi*, HGE is transmitted by the Ixodes tick, and simultaneous infections with both have been reported.