



Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI) Fact Sheet

Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI) is a disease that presents like Lyme disease with a "bull's-eye" rash also known as erythema migrans (EM). It has been described in humans residing in southeastern and south-central states.

Transmission

STARI is associated with the bite of the lone star tick, *Amblyomma americanum*. This tick's life cycle and ecologic requirements are similar to Ixodes (the Lyme disease tick). All three life stages of *A. americanum* aggressively bite people in the southern U.S. Research indicates that live spirochetes are observed in only 1-3% of *A. americanum*.

Clinical Description

People living or traveling in the southeast or south-central states who develop a red, expanding rash with central clearing following the bite of the lone star tick, *A. americanum*, should see their physician. STARI symptoms can include fatigue, headaches, possible fever, muscle aches, stiff neck, and joint pains. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is interested in obtaining samples from such patients under an Institutional Review Board-approved investigational protocol.

Laboratory Diagnosis

There is currently no diagnostic test available for STARI. The agent of STARI, presumably *B. lonestari*, has not been successfully cultivated from *A. americanum* ticks or from biopsy specimens of EM lesions, or from other human tissue or blood. A PCR test to be used on skin biopsy specimens is available from the CDC. Serologic specimens obtained from patients with STARI might yield a positive or equivocal Lyme disease (*B. burgdorferi*) ELISA screening test, but will probably be negative when tested by the more specific WB.

Prevention

Certain measures should be taken to reduce disease risk associated with ticks: avoid tick habitats, reduce tick abundance, use personal protection equipment, and check for and remove ticks.

In most circumstances, treating people who only have a tick bite is not recommended. Individuals who are bitten by any tick should remove the tick and seek medical attention if any signs and symptoms of early STARI, Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, babesiosis, or tularemia develop over the ensuing days or weeks.

For more information please visit our website at <http://www.MyFloridaEH.com> or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/ticktips2005/>

** CDC is currently recruiting collaborating physicians for a clinical study of tick-bite associated rash lesions of unknown etiology in the southern United States. If you are interested in participating, please contact your county health department or Dr. Carina Blackmore, Florida Department of Health (850) 245-4732 for more information.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch. "Tick Bites and Erythema Migrans in Georgia: It Might NOT be Lyme Disease."