

TICKED OFF

JOHNNY'S STORY



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba



Role: Civil Engineer for North Highland Forest District
Base: Inverness
Diagnosis: Chronic Lyme Disease

Outdoor Experience:

"I probably spend half my time in the office and half my time on site. I can be out walking road lines, inspecting bridges, the kind of things which involve a lot of walking through long grass – and tick rich places."

My Experience:

"I first started to develop symptoms probably about fifteen years ago, and I didn't really recognise them as Lyme Disease at that time. I had various problems, mainly problems with my joints and back and hips, things like that, and then I woke up one morning and was unable to raise my right arm above shoulder height. I thought initially I'd strained a muscle or something and didn't think much more about it and I kept going. After that I found that I was having severe memory problems. One morning I was driving to work and ended up in a village - I had no idea where I was or how I'd got there. At that point, I realised there was something seriously wrong and I needed to go and see the doctors."

"I was initially in the dark about Lyme Disease. I knew it existed but I didn't really piece my symptoms and Lyme Disease together. However, eventually I started to think because I couldn't get a diagnosis of anything

else, I started to wonder and I did a lot of research, read about it, and realised that a lot of my symptoms were common with Lyme Disease."

"I went to my GP and asked for a Lyme test, which they did, reluctantly, and that came back positive. I was then treated with antibiotics at that point. That was about three years ago. The treatment was not particularly successful. It actually made me worse for, initially for about six months, and I ended up having to take five months off work. I then gradually improved and got quite well again until the following year, round about the same time of year, and I had a relapse and I was put back on another six-week course of antibiotics. And since then I've just basically learnt how to live with it."

"My diagnosis is Chronic Lyme. The long-term prognosis is pretty much that once you get to that stage it's quite difficult to get rid of. I'm now at

the stage of managing it rather than thinking that I can get a cure. I've been told by the consultant that more antibiotics are not going to make any difference. It's really a matter of managing it myself. I've been doing various things, one of which is hyperbaric oxygen therapy, which I've found to be really helpful, but I have to do it privately."

"Having Chronic Lyme is very debilitating - or it can be. It comes in waves, so some months I feel fine and great, but I have to be very careful about not overdoing it. I can't say up late, I can't party, I can't drink. Work tends to take most of my energy so I have very little energy left for home life. That's not the case all the time, sometimes I feel fine and normal, but generally I have to watch what I do and recognise symptoms. I'm getting quite good at recognising when to stop, when to slow down."

Johnny's Top Tips

- Don't sit about in long grass eating lunch!
- Wear impregnated clothing to protect against ticks.
- Use a mirror to check bites you can't see – or get the help of a family member.
- Don't underestimate the impact of Lyme Disease if it goes untreated in the early stages.
- Not all GPs are aware of Lyme Disease – tell them your circumstances.

AVOID • CHECK • REMOVE • REPORT