

TICKED OFF

KEVIN'S STORY



Role: National Policy Advisor for Access Health and Recreation
Base: Edinburgh/Hamilton
Diagnosis: Lyme Disease

Outdoor Experience:

"I am the policy advisor for Access, Health & Recreation in Forestry Commission Scotland. My job covers access legislation including rights and responsibilities, outdoor recreation, and tourism, and managing Forestry Commission's woods for health programme. My work takes me outdoors on average about once a week to woodlands and forests across Scotland."

My Experience:

"My experience started in May 2012. I returned home after a site visit in Aberdeen. When I awoke the next morning, I took a shower before work and noticed a black spot on my right ankle. It looked like a tick bite, but I wasn't sure as the insect's body had been knocked off during the shower. I kept an eye on the bite as it had some inflammation around the site. There was no ring or bullseye rash and at the time I felt fine. So having had tick bites before, I monitored it and I thought everything would be okay."

"Two months later, I was going home after a work site visit to Glasgow. I had been feeling unwell all day with flu like symptoms. When I arrived home I collapsed in the hall. I felt dizzy and had a stiff neck, headache and heart palpitations (Lyme carditis)."

"When my wife got in from work, she found me lying on the hall floor. I was confused and disorientated.

She took me straight to the health centre. Luckily my GP saw me quickly; she took my blood pressure and heart rate, and called an ambulance. I didn't know what was happening and the next thing I knew I was in an ambulance, being given a sugary drink, and on a hospital bed in A&E. I was admitted to a cardiology ward and had various machines monitoring my heart function."

"I was in hospital for two days and was given oral antibiotics for 3 days. The consultant said my blood results showed I had a significant infectious illness. He wasn't sure about the cause and asked me to visit my own GP and come back as an out-patient for more tests. He thought I would recover from the infection and told me to monitor my condition. During the consultation, I told him I worked in forestry, and recalled having an insect bite on my right ankle."

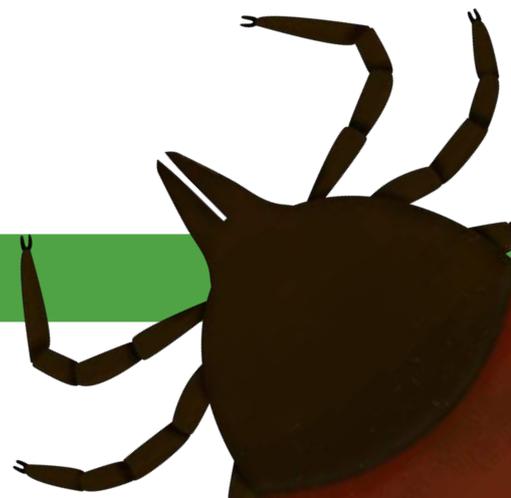
"I felt okay for a couple of months, but started getting more tired. I didn't have my normal energy or drive. I'm a fit and active person and I was struggling after work, falling asleep on the coach unable to exercise, in a malaise. I knew something was seriously wrong and I was worried."

"To help me recover I had a week's holiday and was severely ill for the second time with a stiff neck, shooting pains across my back, headache, and flu-like symptom including chills and sweats. I went back to the doctor and asked for anti-biotic treatment for a tick borne infection based on my symptoms."

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Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba





Kevin's Experience (Continued):

"Unfortunately, my GP was not supportive, so I asked for a blood test for Lyme Disease. The blood test came back false negative so my doctor was unwilling to prescribe antibiotic treatment. She thought I had chronic fatigue syndrome."

"I was feeling ill with a low mood and lethargy. A couple of months later I went back to my GP and described my symptoms again and talked about the insect bite on my ankle and how the bite had not healed properly. To my mind this clearly pointed to a tick borne infection and required antibiotic treatment."

"Eventually the GP agreed to refer me to the infectious disease unit at Monklands hospital and prescribed me a two-week course of Doxycycline. This was sixteen months after the insect bite."

"I got the antibiotic treatment and within two or three days I had a Herxheimer Reaction this is a short-term (from days to a few weeks) detoxification reaction in the body. So my symptoms got worse - before they got better. Within weeks I started to feel a real change. And with that, my fitness and health slowly returned over the next six months."

"I went back to see the consultant at the Infectious Disease Unit, and she confirmed a tick-borne infection had caused my illness."

Kevin's Top Tips

- **Make sure you wear tick proof clothing if you can, particularly long trousers. Tuck your trousers into your socks and make sure to check yourself after an outdoor visit.**
- **Stay on paths and don't go into long grass or bracken unless you really need to.**
- **Keep a magnifying glass handy to check for nymph sized ticks.**
- **Be assertive with your GP and get the right antibiotic treatment. (Doxycycline 100mg or Amoxicillin 500mg tds, po for 2-3 weeks).**
- **Be aware - Lyme Disease blood tests give false negative and false positive results in certain circumstances.**
- **Lyme Disease is not the only type of tick borne infection.**
- **Tell your doctor you work in Forestry and have been bitten by a tick.**



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