

Stomach pain can be a symptom of Lyme disease

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<https://danielcameronmd.com/neurologic-lyme-disease-presenting-as-abdominal-pain-in-71-year-old-patient/>

The 71-year-old woman underwent an exhaustive evaluation to determine the cause of her abdominal pain. Tests included: CT scan of the chest and abdomen; whole body emission tomography-CT scan (PET-CT); colonoscopy; gastroscopy, and an MRI of the small intestines. Initially, doctors did not consider testing for Lyme disease as a cause of the patient's stomach pain.

The woman was admitted to the hospital for pain management and other diagnostic workups.

READ MORE: [Lyme disease manifests as abdominal pain in a young child](#)

Approximately 8 weeks prior to her hospitalization, she experienced temporary lower back pain, myalgia, fever, burning sensations and tenderness on her head and upper legs and moderate stomach pain. Several weeks later, her abdominal pain worsened.

“Going over the history again, she emphasized that she had stayed in a high endemic area for ticks and had suffered a possible tick bite without any sign of erythema migrans,” [writes Stolk and colleagues](#).

Lyme disease associated with stomach pain

Serologic testing and a spinal tap were consistent with Neurologic Lyme disease. The spinal tap revealed an elevated IgM antibody to *Borrelia burgdorferi* (*Bb*), a lymphocytic pleocytosis, markedly elevated IgM antibody index to *Bb*, and markedly elevated IgG antibody to *Bb*.

The authors point out that “Since the incidence of LD is rising it is important to realize that severe abdominal pain could be the first clinical manifestation of early [neuroborreliosis](#).”

After a 2-week course of intravenous ceftriaxone to treat Lyme disease, the woman's symptoms, including stomach pain, resolved completely.

This case demonstrates the importance of re-examining a patient's history when symptoms cannot be explained, the authors point out.

“Instead of doing extensive diagnostic tests, it is important to scrutinize the patient's medical history in the presence of unexplained clinical signs.”

The authors note: Abdominal pain in the presence of facial paralysis has been described in Europe as Bannwarth Syndrome.

Editor's note: I often see Lyme disease patients in my practice who present with stomach pain severe

enough to warrant extensive diagnostic testing before Lyme disease is suspected.

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References:

1. Stolk JM, van Nieuwkoop C, van der Voorn M, van Erp S, van Burgel ND. Ticking off diagnoses of abdominal pain: early neuroborreliosis with radiculopathy. *Neth J Med.* 2018;76(7):336-338.

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