

HB 1351: Health Insurance - Lyme Disease and Related Tick-Borne Illnesses - Long-Term Antibiotic Treatment: Please SUPPORT this long overdue bill!!

Dear Health & Government Operations Committee Chair Pena-Melnuk, Vice Chair Cullison, and all other esteemed Committee Members:

This bill for long-term antibiotic treatment of Lyme Disease and related tick-borne illnesses has been long overdue!!

Long-term antibiotic treatment has been used for a long time now to treat Lyme Disease and related tick-borne illnesses. It has been the preferred treatment for Lyme-literate doctors across the world. This is now the new standard treatment, especially for chronic Lyme disease sufferers.

“Patients with persistent Lyme symptoms will often need longer treatment courses and combination therapies to address co-infections, biofilms, and stationary phase *Borrelia*...” according to Project Lyme. “...Treatment recommendations: Adults and children can expect to be in treatment for 14 or more weeks, preferably under the guidance of a Lyme disease specialist. Protocols will typically involve individualized combination therapy with at least two dissimilar antibiotics to address both fast replicating and persister forms of *Borrelia*, as well as biofilms...”

<https://projectlyme.org/resource/treating-lyme-with-antibiotics/>

“A new study from researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found that a slow-growing variant form of Lyme bacteria caused severe symptoms in a mouse model. The slow-growing variant form of Lyme bacteria, according to the researchers, may account for the persistent symptoms seen in ten to twenty percent of Lyme patients that are not cured by the current Lyme antibiotic treatment...The study, published March 28 in *Discovery Medicine*, also found that these “persister” Lyme bacteria were resistant to standard single-antibiotic Lyme treatments currently used to treat Lyme patients, while a three-antibiotic cocktail eradicated the Lyme bacteria in the mouse model...For their study, the scientists isolated slow-growth forms of the Lyme bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. They found that, compared to normal fast-growth forms, the slow-growing forms caused more severe arthritis-like symptoms and resisted standard antibiotic treatment in test tube as well as in a mouse model. The scientists found that a combination of three antibiotics—daptomycin, doxycycline and ceftriaxone—cleared the Lyme infection in

the study mice. The scientists now hope to test the combination in people with persistent Lyme disease...”

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2019/three-antibiotic-cocktail-clears-persistent-lyme-bacteria-in-mouse-study>

“What is Post Treatment Lyme Disease?”

Post Treatment Lyme Disease (PTLD) represents a research subset of patients who remain significantly ill 6 months or more following standard antibiotic therapy for Lyme disease. PTLD is characterized by a constellation of symptoms that includes severe fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbance, depression, and cognitive problems such as difficulty with short-term memory, speed of thinking, or multi-tasking...

Symptoms of Post Treatment Lyme Disease

- **Include severe fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, & cognitive problems**
- **Can significantly impact patients’ health and quality of life**
- **Can be debilitating and prolonged**

Our research indicates the chronic symptom burden related to PTLD is significant. Although often invisible to others, the negative impact on quality of life and daily functioning is substantial for PTLD sufferers...In addition to *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, there are several other tick-borne co-infections that may also contribute to more prolonged and complicated illness...**The persistent symptoms in Lyme disease can have a large negative impact on an individual’s health and quality of life...**

Late Lyme Arthritis

What is the prognosis for Late Lyme Arthritis?

Following antibiotic therapy, approximately 90% of late Lyme arthritis patients recover from extensive joint swelling, arthritis, and pain.

What happens if a patient doesn’t recover from Late Lyme Arthritis?

After extensive antibiotic treatment, approximately 10% of late Lyme arthritis patients remain symptomatic with a condition termed antibiotic refractory late Lyme arthritis. Extensive research has shown that the bacteria can no longer be found in the tissue

or fluid of this subgroup of patients. **However**, recent research shows that peptidoglycans, from parts of *Borrelia burgdorferi*'s cell wall, can remain behind in patients' joints and trigger an immune reaction that could be perpetuating the inflammation observed in some Lyme arthritis patients...”, according to **Johns Hopkins Medicine Lyme Disease Research Center**.

<https://www.hopkinslyme.org/lyme-disease/treatment-and-prognosis-of-lyme-disease/>

Based on these resources, I would respectfully request that all of you SUPPORT this bill!! I think we owe it to the long-term sufferers of Lyme Disease and the associated and related tick-borne illnesses to pass this bill!!

Thank you for your time and attention in reading to the end and your courtesy and cooperation in SUPPORTING this bill!!

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother, Lyme-diagnosed person, and Maryland resident