



12th May 2025

Deputy Darren O'Rourke, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 20500/25

To ask the Minister for Health to outline the diagnosis and treatment pathway for patients suffering with Lyme disease; if there are plans to introduce extended antibiotic therapy as a matter of course or to make antibiotic assistive hypothermia therapy available here or through the treatment abroad or the cross-border directive; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Rourke,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the National Clinical Programme (NCP) for Infectious Diseases, Laboratory Reform Programme and the National Services & Schemes on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

Lyme is a tick borne infection that occurs when recreational or occupation activities result in tick bites from an infected tick.

The infection is known to be endemic in certain locations and in these areas the GPs are generally very familiar with the most typical presentation which is a rash, often with a bull's eye appearance and they can take care of the patient's treatment based on guidance provided by the HSE. More complicated cases require referral to infectious diseases clinics. Patients with post-Lyme syndrome can be referred by their GP to a public hospital infectious disease clinic in Ireland.

The Infectious Disease clinics operating in the public hospital system support the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) guidelines regarding the diagnoses and treatment of Lyme. Many hospital laboratories have the capacity to do the first stage of testing for Lyme serology (ELISA). Those that do not can send the samples to the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) for first stage testing. When additional second stage testing for antibodies is required, the sample is sent to the UK Health Security Agency, Rare and Imported Pathogens Laboratory for additional testing (Immunoblot). This laboratory can also test samples for genes (DNA) of the bacteria that causes Lyme disease when required.

Treatment is in line with national and international best practice guidelines, as outlined in Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) guidelines¹ that have been endorsed by the Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland² (IDSI). Specific recommendations around antimicrobial therapy duration are made in these guidelines. The choice of antimicrobial use for treatment and the duration of antimicrobial therapy specified in treatment depends on the stage of disease. The duration of treatment required for late stage disease is longer than that for early stage disease in the guidance. The balance of risk and benefit does not support administration of antimicrobial treatment for longer than is specified in this guidance as a matter of course. There is not sufficient evidence to recommend hypothermia as a component of treatment for Lyme disease.

In relation to approval of funding to travel abroad, in general, the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) allows public patients in Ireland to access healthcare, which is not available in the public system in Ireland, in another EU/EEA country, the UK or Switzerland. The treatment must be a treatment to which the patient would have been entitled to if it had been available in the public healthcare system in Ireland. The treatment is subject to certain criteria. The Scheme is governed by EU Regulations & Directives and Department of Health Guidelines & Circulars. The Irish-based referring Consultant must outline his/her recommendation that the patient be treated in another EU/EEA country, the UK or Switzerland and the reason for same in line with the qualifying criteria for the Scheme. Each application for funding is considered on a case by case basis.



I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Anne Horgan
General Manager

References:

1. Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/lyme-disease/>
2. Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland (IDSI) - [Home - IDSI \(idsociety.ie\)](http://idsociety.ie)