

How Lyme Disease Mimics Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

by Laura Pickford Ramirez

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Dr. Charles Ray Jones, the world's leading pediatric specialist on Lyme Disease calls it "the second great imitator." (Syphilis is the first.) Since it can affect the entire body in a myriad of ways, it often mimics [Attention Deficit Disorder](#) (ADD), [rheumatoid arthritis](#), autism, depression, chronic fatigue, multiple sclerosis and more. If this disease is not diagnosed properly it can become chronic and cause neuralgic, psychiatric, cardiac and arthritic problems. Left untreated, it can lead to heart block, seizure disorder and brain destruction. Although in rare cases, people have died from it, most live a life of constant suffering.

Jakey Osborne (not his real name) was a healthy, active eight-year old boy, who suddenly began having attention problems in school. Says his mother, Susan, "His teacher said that he couldn't focus or remember his lessons. He didn't want to play at recess and his grades were slipping from A's to C's and D's. She recommended that I take him to a doctor and have him checked for Attention Deficit Disorder."

Susan Osborne took her son to his pediatrician, who prescribed Ritalin, but the drug did not improve Jakey's [symptoms](#). Instead, he became more reclusive and his reading and math skills regressed. Six months later, Mrs. Osborne happened across an article on Lyme disease and remembered that about a month before her son's behavior changed, her family had gone on a camping trip. She took Jakey to a specialist, who diagnosed Lyme disease and put him on an eight week course of [antibiotics](#). Almost immediately, his symptoms improved. Today, thanks in part to his attentive mother, Jakey Osborne is a healthy nine-year old, who excels in sports and reads at a sixth grade level.

According to Dr. Jones, "ADD usually evolves by age five. If your child has been performing well in school and suddenly starts exhibiting ADD-like symptoms, you should first seek a specialist to rule out Lyme disease. If your child is already taking Ritalin and it's had no effect, the problem could be Lyme disease."

About ninety percent of the Lyme kids Dr. Jones treats have [learning disabilities](#). Children who have Lyme disease, but not ADD, will quickly improve their ability to focus and sit still, while receiving antibiotics. If the antibiotics are stopped too soon, the symptoms will return. Since left untreated, Lyme disease can spread into the brain, heart, eyes, lungs, [urinary tract](#), peripheral nervous system and joints, if you have any suspicions that the symptoms could be related to Lyme, have your child checked immediately.

Lyme disease is transmitted through a tick bite. But it can also be transmitted through semen, breast milk and gestational fluids. This means that a fetus can be infected by its mother. To date, Dr. Jones has successfully treated Lyme-infected pregnant women and their babies, who were born with the disease. The implications for a fetus which contracts Lyme in utero are anatomical defects of the heart and eye, fewer or more digits than normal, cataracts, learning disabilities and extreme irritability.

The difficulty with diagnosing this illness is that the tests are only about sixty-five percent accurate. There are two tests: the ELISA and the Western Blot. Of the two, the Western Blot is more definitive. According to Dr. Jones about thirty percent of those with a positive Western Blot had a negative ELISA. Also available is a PCR test via a spinal tap withdrawal of synovial fluid from an affected joint. IGeneX Laboratories is the leading U.S.-based lab for helping physicians diagnose Lyme.

Although the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a three week course of antibiotics, Dr. Jones has found that the bacteria that causes this illness has become increasingly hardy and even when the disease is caught early, it often needs to be treated with an eight to twelve week course of antibiotics.