

Lyme Disease

Be on the alert!

Dear Editor:

I want to draw everyone's attention to the risk of Lyme disease, which a person may have contracted even if he or she spent only one Shabbos in the country this summer.

Please be on the alert for the signs and symptoms. Most people know about the bull's-eye rash, but it doesn't appear in about 40 percent of cases. Lyme disease symptoms are usually non-specific, and a person may therefore not even suspect it until it has done too much damage. Initially one may have nothing more than flu-like symptoms, chills, and muscle aches; these can progress to fatigue, headaches, and a stiff neck.

If you know of anyone who has been experiencing flu-like symptoms and who has spent time recently in an area where deer are common, such as upstate New York, Monsey or Lakewood, please encourage that person to see a doctor and ask to be tested for Lyme disease. Time is of the essence; the illness may be protracted if it is discovered late.

L.P.

"Mommy Brain"

Working-memory loss

In reference to Feature, Issue 331

Dear Editor:

I read with fascination the article about "Mommy brain." It was timely as I had recently experienced an episode of my own.

We had booked train tickets to return home from our summer holiday. The past two years we had departed from a small station where very few trains stop each day. This year we would depart from the main station a bit further away. I read the name of the main station on the ticket, I heard my husband mention the name of the station many times, and I still booked a taxi to the small station—and I was surprised when the train did not show up!

Baruch Hashem, we arrived home in time for Shabbos. Have I got a story to tell my clients!

Another explanation for "Mommy brain" is that it is a form of working-memory loss. The working memory is a cognitive system that holds a limited amount of information for processing for a short time. It is vital for optimal daily functioning. The average person's working memory is like a small table that can hold about four to seven items of information at one time. When a mother

has the capacity to hold four items in her working memory and a fifth item is placed on the "table," one of the other four is knocked off. This partly explains the phenomenon of "Mommy brain"; when the brain is loaded with too much information, the working memory is stressed and its capacity diminishes.

Exhaustion greatly contributes to temporary "Mommy brain," reducing the capacity of the working memory to one item—or nothing at all. Let me stress that mild processing issues can become worse with exhaustion and stress. You may hear one thing and understand something completely different, with disastrous consequences.

Many of our clients who suffer from "Mommy brain" greatly benefit from improved time management and organizational skills. We find that our clients already have a good base level of these skills, but the great responsibility of motherhood necessitates an upgrade. Clients report that sharpening their skills creates an inner anchor of calm and stability. This quiets the white noise that is common with "Mommy brain" and improves focus and overall functioning.

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