



# Tick Bites Trigger Surprising Red Meat Allergy: Key Signs

## Description

Val Smith experienced a distressing bout of itchiness while on a river cruise in France. The discomfort in her arms, torso, and legs kept her awake all night, and she was left pondering the cause. This wasn't her first experience with such a reaction; weeks prior, Val had similar symptoms after consuming beef. After researching online, she uncovered information about alpha-gal syndrome (AGS), an allergy triggered by a tick bite, leading to allergic reactions to red meat. This discovery brought back memories of a tick bite she had suffered seven years earlier, shortly after moving to the New Forest.

During that previous incident, the tick bite caused severe swelling around her knee. Her doctor eventually diagnosed her with Lyme disease, but Val was unaware at the time that the tick had also sensitized her to alpha-gal, a sugar molecule found in mammalian meat. Just like a domino effect, her body's immune response included developing AGS.

AGS symptoms can vary widely, from mild itching to severe anaphylaxis, and they often appear several hours after consuming red meat, which differs from typical rapid-onset allergic reactions. While AGS is more prevalent in the southeastern United States, it has been increasingly reported in other parts of the world, including the UK. Diagnosis is tricky as it requires a specific blood test, which many healthcare providers might not immediately consider.

Upon returning home, Val's GP initially dismissed her symptoms as a heat rash, unaware of AGS's presence in the UK. Eventually, Val's insistence led to a proper diagnosis, confirming her severe reaction to red meat. Her journey raises awareness of AGS's global spread and reminds us of the importance of exploring unusual allergy causes.

## Vocabulary List:

1. **Distressing** /dɪ'stɹɛs.ɪŋ/ (adjective): Causing anxiety or sorrow; upsetting.
2. **Sensitivity** /,sɛn.sɪ'tɪv.ɪ.ti/ (noun): The quality of being responsive to stimuli; the state of being sensitive.
3. **Diagnosis** /,daɪəg'nɒʊsɪs/ (noun): The identification of the nature of an illness or other problem.
4. **Anaphylaxis** /,æn.ə.fɪ'læk.sɪs/ (noun): A severe potentially life-threatening allergic reaction.
5. **Prevalent** /'prɛvələnt/ (adjective): Widespread in a particular area or at a particular time.
6. **Researching** /rɪ'sɜːr.tʃɪŋ/ (verb): The act of investigating or studying a subject in depth.

## Comprehension Questions



### Multiple Choice

1. What triggered Val Smith's allergic reactions to red meat?
  - Option: Consuming beef
  - Option: Tick bite
  - Option: Insect sting
  - Option: Ingesting dairy products
  
2. How did Val Smith uncover information about alpha-gal syndrome (AGS)?
  - Option: Consulting a nutritionist
  - Option: Online research
  - Option: Visiting a dermatologist
  - Option: Reading a medical journal
  
3. Which sugar molecule found in mammalian meat can trigger alpha-gal syndrome?
  - Option: Alpha-galactose
  - Option: Beta-glucose
  - Option: Delta-fructose
  - Option: Gamma-sucrose
  
4. Where is alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) more prevalent?
  - Option: Western Europe
  - Option: Southeastern United States
  - Option: South America
  - Option: Eastern Asia
  
5. What is a common symptom of AGS?
  - Option: Rapid heartbeat
  - Option: Severe joint pain
  - Option: Mild itching
  - Option: Wheezing
  
6. How are AGS symptoms different from typical allergic reactions?
  - Option: They appear immediately
  - Option: They occur days after exposure
  - Option: They are limited to facial swelling
  - Option: They manifest several hours later



### True-False

7. Alpha-gal syndrome is triggered by a tick bite.
8. AGS diagnosis requires a specific blood test.
9. Val Smith developed AGS after consuming dairy products.
10. AGS symptoms are uniform and consistent in all affected individuals.
11. AGS is primarily reported in Asia.
12. Val Smith was diagnosed with Lyme disease after her tick bite in the New Forest.

### Gap-Fill

13. Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) symptoms can range from mild itching to severe \_\_\_\_\_.
14. AGS has been increasingly reported in parts of the world, including \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Val's GP initially dismissed her symptoms as a \_\_\_\_\_, unaware of AGS.
16. Proper diagnosis of AGS often requires a specific \_\_\_\_\_, which may not be readily considered by healthcare providers.
17. Val Smith's severe reaction to red meat eventually led to a confirmed diagnosis of alpha-gal syndrome upon her \_\_\_\_\_.
18. AGS's global spread emphasizes the need to investigate \_\_\_\_\_ allergy causes.

### Answer

**Multiple Choice:** 1. Tick bite 2. Online research 3. Alpha-galactose 4. Southeastern United States 5. Mild itching 6. They manifest several hours later

**True-False:** 7. True 8. True 9. False 10. False 11. False 12. True

**Gap-Fill:** 13. anaphylaxis 14. the UK 15. heat rash 16. blood test 17. insistence 18. unusual



## Answer

### CATEGORY

1. Health - LEVEL4

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### Author

aimeeyoung99

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