

Protecting Your Family From Ticks

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Ticks are very small 8-legged bugs that can transmit diseases to humans (tick-borne diseases). It's important to protect yourself and your family from tick bites.

Where are ticks found?

Ticks live in grassy or wooded areas. They do not jump or fly, but latch onto passing animals or humans. Different areas of the country have different types of ticks. Check with your state or local department of health to find out which ticks are common in your area.

How do ticks spread disease?

Ticks become infected with bacteria or viruses when they feed on the blood of small animals. When they bite other animals or humans, these infections can be transmitted and cause disease.

Who is most at risk for tick-borne diseases?

Anyone who works or spends time outdoors, particularly in wooded areas or areas with tall grasses is at risk for tick bites and the diseases they spread. Children have some of the highest rates of tick-borne diseases most likely because they spend a lot of time close to the ground in grassy areas where ticks live.

What are the symptoms of a tick bite?

Tick bites can lead to a number of different diseases and reactions. Symptoms may include fever, joint and muscle pain, fatigue, headache, and in some cases rash. In some cases of Lyme Disease, one of the most common tick-borne diseases, a bulls-eye shaped mark is present where the bite occurred.

When are you most at risk?

Tick infections can occur year round, but are most common in late spring through early summer when young ticks (nymphs) are active. Around the size of a poppy seed, nymphs are hard to see, making bites more likely to go undetected.

Adult ticks are most active in spring and fall. Since they are larger and easier to spot than nymphs, infections may be less likely to occur.

Climate change is leading to less predictable patterns of tick activity and increased geographical range. These developments are increasing the spread of tick-borne diseases.



What should I do if I'm bit by a tick?



If you find a tick that is attached:

- As soon as possible, use **sharp**, pointed tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin where it is inserted and pull it out.
- Pull the tick straight out, being careful not to squeeze it.
- Be sure to remove all parts of the tick.
- Clean the bite area with alcohol or soap and water.
- Place the tick in alcohol or flush it down the toilet.



Treating tick bites:

If you remove an engorged tick (full of blood), call your doctor to discuss the recommendations for treatment in your area. If you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms within 30 days of a tick bite, contact a doctor. A simple blood test can diagnose Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, which can be treated with antibiotics.

Preventing tick bites



When outdoors in areas that ticks live:

- Wear long pants tucked into high socks.
- Wear light colors so it's easy to see ticks on your clothing.
- Walk in the center of trails when in the woods.



Use tick repellent safely:

- Avoid repellent bracelets and essential oils not proven to be effective against ticks.
- Avoid products that combine insect repellent and sunscreen.
- Avoid products that contain DEET at greater than 30% concentration.
- Apply bug sprays containing the following EPA registered active ingredients to exposed skin: DEET: 20-30%, Picardin: 20%, and Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (not for children under 3 years due to lack of safety information).

The benefits of some synthetic insect repellents outweigh the risk of tick-borne diseases that can have life-long impacts. 30% DEET can provide a full day of protection. Higher concentrations are not more effective and can be harmful to health.



After coming indoors:

- Change your clothes and place them in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes as soon as you come inside.
- Check yourself, your pets, and any gear like backpacks and picnic blankets for ticks.
- Shower within 2 hours of coming inside.



In your yard:

Eliminate places where ticks live:

- Mow frequently and clear tall grasses.
- Remove piles of leaves, debris, or wood.
- Construct fences to keep out animals that carry ticks.
- Keep playground equipment away from property edges and woods.
- Place a gravel or mulch barrier around your property.



Use safer pest control methods:

- Apply a natural cedar oil repellent spray.
- Install bait boxes around the perimeter of your property. These contain bait that attracts mice, the most common tick carriers, and brush its fur with an insecticide that is toxic to ticks but not the mouse itself.