

Tick-borne Illness Prevention

What you can do to protect yourself from tick-borne diseases:

Perform daily tick checks!! Always check for ticks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Because ticks must be attached for at least a day before they can transmit the bacteria that cause Lyme disease, early removal can reduce the risk of infection. Check your pets too! Check inside and behind the ears, along your hairline, back of your neck, armpits, groin, legs, behind your knees, and between your toes. Ticks are tiny, so look for new “freckles”.

Use insect repellent. Spray repellent containing a 20% concentration of DEET on clothes and on exposed skin. You can also treat clothes with permethrin, which kills ticks on contact. Do not use permethrin directly on skin.

Avoid tick-infested areas if possible. This is especially important in May, June, and July. When outdoors, walk in the center of trails to avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter at trail edges.

Wear protective clothing. Wearing long-sleeves, long pants tucked into your socks when outdoors will keep ticks away from your skin. Light-colored clothing will help you spot a tick more easily. Check your gear, clothing and pets when you come inside.

Bathe or shower. Do so after being outdoors (preferably within 2 hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks crawling on you.

Maintain your yard. Keep grass cut short, remove leaves and brush, trim low-lying bushes and keep woodpiles and bird feeders off the ground and away from the house. You can also use a 3-foot wide woodchip, mulch or gravel border where you lawn meets the woods.

Protect your pets. Talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets and livestock from ticks.

Remove ticks from your skin properly.

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible (avoid crushing the tick’s body)
2. Pull upward with steadiness, even pressure to remove the tick (do not be alarmed if the tick’s mouthparts remain in the skin). Avoid twisting or jerking.
3. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic and wash your hands with rubbing alcohol, iodine scrub, or soap and water.
4. DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products.

Follow up if you’ve been bitten.

- Circle the calendar date and note where on the body the tick was removed. You may want to save the tick for identification.
- Your physician may choose to treat you following a deer tick bite. Notify your health care provider if you have been bitten by a deer tick or if you develop a rash or other signs of illness following a tick bite.
- Talk to your doctor if you develop a rash where you were bitten or experience symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, or sore and aching muscles.