

Ticks Can Make You Sick!



Because of the larger number of active ticks throughout the US, tick-borne diseases are on the rise. A warm, moist spring caused adult ticks to become active in April which is much earlier than normal. If you or your family spend time outside in the woods, your lawn, or around bushes and other foliage, you are at risk. More on prevention below, but first some information about ticks and the diseases that they carry.

How Ticks Infect People and Pets

There are several varieties of ticks, and they all carry specific diseases. The blacklegged tick or “deer tick” (pictured here) carries Lyme disease, Powassan virus (POW), and other diseases. It is especially common in New England. Other varieties of ticks can infect people with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF), a serious disease that is sometimes fatal.

Ticks spread various bacteria and viruses by injecting them into humans and animals when feeding. Typically, this happens when an adult tick attaches its head and begins to ingest blood. Since a mild anesthetic is also injected into the bite, people often feel nothing.

How to Prevent Tick Bites

For people, there are three major ways to prevent tick bites and infection.

1. Wear protective clothing, including long-sleeved shirts and long pants with the legs tucked into socks. Closed footwear is essential. Do not wear shorts and flip-flops into the woods or grass!
2. Whenever you go outside or into wooded areas, consider using an insect repellent with at least 20% DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 formula. Also treat clothing and gear with a product containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin remains effective through several

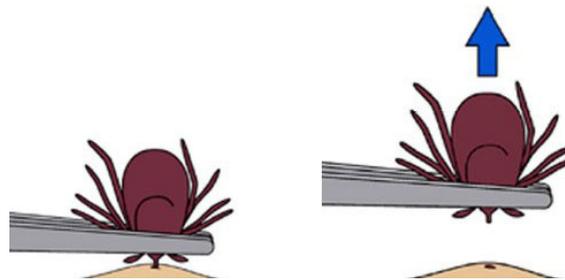
washings. For help in selecting effective products for you and your family, use the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) tool](#).

3. Examine every part of your body as soon as you return indoors. Ticks can attach themselves to any area of your body: under arms, in your hair, between your legs (crotch area), in your belly button, and other nooks and crannies. Ask relatives or friends to help you check areas that you cannot see. Don't be bashful about this! Also remember to check the bodies of your children thoroughly.

You should also thoroughly check any pet, dog or cat, that has been outside. Check every time they come in. Ticks often burrow into an animal's fur, making them hard to see. Once a tick gets into your home, it can then transfer to people. Medications are available that prevent ticks from hosting on dogs or cats, and they generally work. But be careful, since some medications that work for dogs are toxic to cats.

Tick Removal

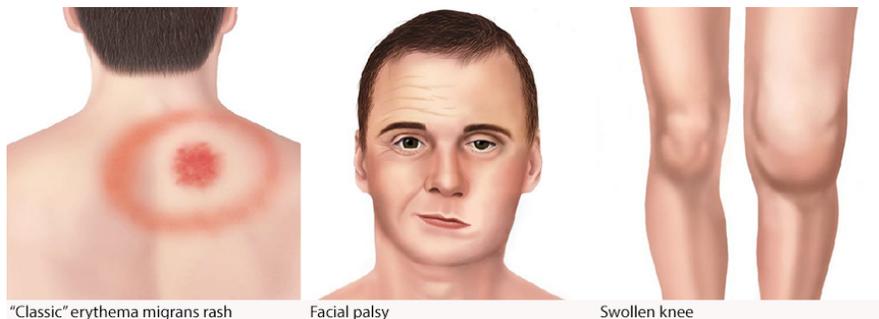
Remove ticks as soon as you discover them. The best way is to grasp the tick as close to the head as possible with tweezers and lift straight up.



If you need assistance with removing a tick or if your attempt is unsuccessful, come to our urgent care clinic. We'll be happy to help you and to answer your questions.

Medical Risks

Lyme Disease: Infection can occur within 24 to 48 hours of a tick's being attached to your body. Symptoms can appear from 3 to 30 days after a tick bite. Common symptoms include a distinctive rash, weakness of facial muscles, and swollen or painful joints, particularly if fatigue and low-grade fever are also present.



Accurate diagnosis of Lyme disease sometimes requires a blood test. Do not self-diagnose! If you think that you or a family member has been infected, be sure to check with us to have the blood test performed if necessary and so that treatment can begin.

It is important to begin treatment as soon as a diagnosis can be confirmed. Lyme disease can have very serious and long-term consequences.

Powassan virus (POW): Infection can occur within 15 minutes of a tick's bite. Early symptoms can appear within 1 week to 1 month. Symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, loss of coordination, speech difficulties, and seizures. Unfortunately, many people who are infected exhibit no early symptoms, making detection very difficult. This is why prevention of tick bites is so important.

The POW virus can infect the central nervous system, causing encephalitis or meningitis. There is no known cure and no vaccines or medications to prevent or treat infection. About half of those infected with POW develop permanent neurological problems such as headaches, memory problems, or muscle weakness.

Conclusion

If you think that you or a family member has been bitten by a tick or if you need assistance in removing a tick, go to an urgent care clinic or other medical facility. Time can be important, and we're open 7 days a week!

Enjoy your summer, but be careful!

The following links can provide additional information:

CT Department of Public Health/Ticks:
<http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3136&q=528408>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Ticks:
<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/symptoms.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Lyme Disease:
<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/diagnostesting/index.html>

National Public Radio/On Point, "Preventing Lyme (and a New Disease) as Ticks Spread" (aired on June 13, 2017): <http://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2017/06/13/preventing-lyme-a-new-disease-ticks-spread>

[Tags: Ticks, tick prevention, tick bites, tick removal, Lyme disease, Powassan virus, ticks and pets]