

Tick Season

What You Should Know About Ticks

This summer has been high season for ticks in Michigan, especially in the Upper Peninsula and on the west coast of the state along the lake. Ticks can carry and transmit diseases such as Lyme disease. It's important to be on alert whenever you, your children and even your pets spend time outside — especially in or near wooded areas.

How can I prevent a tick bite?

When possible, wear long sleeved shirts and long pants. Tuck pants into socks to prevent ticks from climbing up the pant leg. Use an insect repellent that includes 30 percent DEET. These repellents last for six hours, so reapply if you are outside longer. Another protective measure is to treat clothing with permethrin. One permethrin application works on clothing for up to six weeks or six washings. It can also be used on sleeping bags and tents. Carefully follow the product's directions when using permethrin.

What are the two types of ticks?

There are two main types of ticks — wood and deer. Wood ticks are larger, about the size of a watermelon seed. Deer ticks are smaller, between the size of a poppy seed and an apple seed. Deer ticks can transmit Lyme disease, but only in about less than 2 percent of cases.



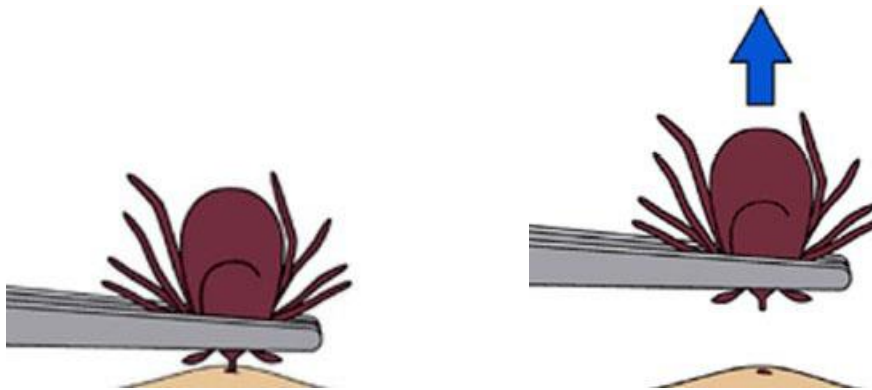
A female black-legged tick from Southwest Michigan. This is one of the ticks that transmit Lyme Disease to humans. ©Erik Foster, Michigan Department of Community Health

How do I check for tick bites?

As soon as you come inside, do a tick check on everyone in the family. A tick has to stay attached for 24 hours before there is any chance of transmitting the organism that causes Lyme disease, so checking right away is important. A tick bite is painless. Ticks burrow into the skin and suck on a person's blood. Be sure to check in and around ears, inside belly buttons, behind knees, between legs, in armpits and in hair.

I found a tick – how do I remove it from the skin?

If you find a tick, do not panic. Most tick bites are harmless, but you should remove it right away. If you find a wood tick, first try to remove it by soaking a cotton ball in liquid soap. Cover the tick with the cotton ball for 30 seconds. In most cases, the tick will be stuck to the cotton ball when you remove it. If that does not work, remove the tick with tweezers. Grasp it close to the skin and pull straight up without twisting or crushing it.



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If you find a deer tick, the smaller kind, scrape it off with a fingernail or edge of a credit card. After removing a tick, wash the bite area and your hands with soap and water, then apply an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment to the bite site.

If you're worried about potential tick-transmitted disease, you can place the tick in a plastic bag after you remove it. If any symptoms develop, you can bring the tick to your doctor's appointment so that it can be properly identified.

What should I watch for after a tick

bite?

After a tick has bitten someone, watch him or her for signs of illness over the following days and weeks. Look for fever, aches and pains, or a rash. If Lyme disease has been transmitted, the rash will typically appear within three to 30 days. A bullseye or circular rash around the bite site is an indication of Lyme disease. Be sure to see your doctor if a rash or any other symptoms develop.

The typical Lyme disease rash has a "bull's eye" pattern



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Other tickborne illnesses have their own rash patterns. Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which can be transmitted by wood ticks, has rash that looks just like it sounds — small spots of rash in the affected area.

Can I still enjoy the outdoor during tick season?

Don't let the fear of ticks keep you from enjoying the outdoors. The risk of disease transmission is small. Take precautions before you go out, check for ticks when you come back in, watch for any symptoms after a bite and contact your healthcare provider if concerned. Most importantly, get outside and enjoy the summer!

Smart Choices for Preventing Tick- Borne Diseases

- Avoid walking in woody and bushy areas with high grass.
- Stay on groomed trails when hiking.
- Wear long, light-colored pants, sleeves and socks. Tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Spray exposed body areas and clothing with tick repellent.
- Search your entire body for ticks after being outdoors and immediately wash your clothing.
- Safely remove ticks. Gently grasp the tick with tweezers and slowly pull upward to allow the tick to release its bite.
- Wash the bite area with alcohol or soap and water, and contact a health care provider if you develop a fever, headache, fatigue or bull's-eye rash

Adapted from: [NIH News in Health](#), June 2009

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Author: Heather Burrows MD, PhD
Reviewer: Ruti Volk, MSI, AHIP

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