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Lyme Disease: Spotlight

Tick Tips

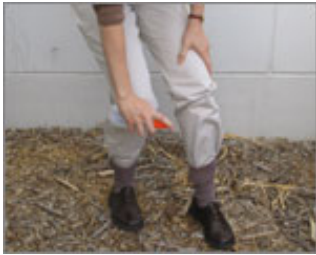
Protect Your Family from Lyme Disease



The bacterium that causes Lyme disease, called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is usually spread through the bite of infected immature ticks. These ticks are really tiny, very difficult to see, and they are out in the spring and summer months hungrily looking for animals or people to bite. A certain type of tick, called *Ixodes*, carries the Lyme disease bacterium. These ticks are usually found in moist wooded areas, and crawl on to people when we brush against leaf litter, the tips of grasses and shrubs. These ticks also feed on animals such as deer, mice, squirrels, rabbits and birds, which all play a role in the ongoing cycle of Lyme disease transmission.

Springtime means that we're all spending more time outdoors – and because Spring is when ticks are most actively feeding, it's an important time to think about Lyme disease. Fortunately you can take some simple steps to protect yourself and your family:

Protect yourself from tick bites



Protect yourself from tick bites.

- **Avoid tick-infested areas!** Most cases occur in the Northeast, from Maryland to Maine; in the North-central states, mostly in Wisconsin and Minnesota; and on the West Coast, particularly northern California. Many local health departments and park or extension services have information about where you should be most concerned about ticks.
- If you are in tick-infested areas, walk in the center of trails.
- **Use insect repellent with DEET or permethrin and protective clothing!** For detailed information, see the [Lyme Disease Prevention and Control page](#).

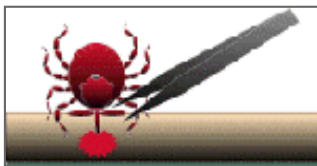
Perform daily tick checks!

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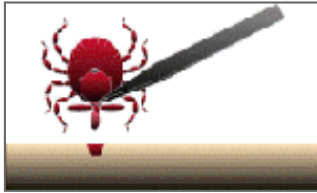
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Proper tick removal, step 1



Proper tick removal, step 2
(Images courtesy CDC Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases)

- Always check for ticks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Because ticks must usually 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.
- Remove attached ticks with tweezers.
 1. Use fine-tipped tweezers or shield your fingers with a tissue, paper towel, or rubber gloves (see image, step 1).
 2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure (see image, step 2). Do not twist or jerk the tick; this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin.
 3. Do not squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick.
 4. After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.
 5. Save the tick for identification in case you become ill. This may help your doctor make an accurate diagnosis. Place the tick in a plastic bag and put it in your freezer.

These instructions courtesy CDC Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases. For *fully detailed* information about tick removal, see their [Rocky Mountain spotted fever site](#).

Tick-proof your yard!



Tick-proof your yard!



Diagram of yard landscaped to create Tick-Safe Zones.
(Images courtesy Kirby Stafford III, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station)

- **Modify your landscape to create Tick-Safe Zones.** Ticks need moist environments; they die quickly where it's dry. So you can use a few tricks to keep them away from areas of the yard where you spend the most time. Laying down wood chips or gravel where lawns butt up against wooded areas can reduce the number of ticks on grassy areas by creating a drying barrier.
- Mow the lawn, clear brush and leaf litter, keep the ground under bird feeders clean, and stack woodpiles neatly in dry areas.
- Keep playground equipment away from yard edges and trees.
- Chemical control: Pesticides can be highly effective in getting rid of ticks, but application should be always be supervised by a licensed professional pest control expert.
- Deer: Removing plants that attract deer and constructing physical barriers may help discourage tick-infested deer from coming near homes.

Want more information about Lyme disease? See our [Lyme Disease site](#).