Understanding Tick Bites and Lyme Disease

How to prevent tick bites

Ticks can spread disease, including Lyme disease.

Protect yourself:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. Always follow product instructions.
- Wear clothing treated with permethrin.
- Shower as soon as possible after spending time outdoors.
- Check for ticks daily. Ticks can hide under the armpits, behind the knees, in the hair, and in the groin.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If the clothes are damp, additional time may be needed.

How to remove a tick

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure to remove the tick. Avoid twisting or jerking.
3. Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

Notes:

- Remove the tick as soon as possible to reduce your chances of getting an infection from the tick bite.
- Don’t use nail polish, petroleum jelly, or a hot match to make the tick detach.
- If tick mouthparts remain in the skin, leave them alone. In most cases, they will fall out in a few days.
When to see your healthcare provider

If you develop a rash, fever, exhaustion, or joint and muscle aches within several weeks of removing a tick or spending time in tick habitat, see your healthcare provider. Be sure to mention your recent tick bite and when it happened, or that you’ve spent time in places where ticks may live.

If left untreated, Lyme disease can affect the joints, heart, or nervous system.

Antibiotics treat Lyme disease

People treated with antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover rapidly and completely. The antibiotics most commonly used to treat Lyme disease include: doxycycline, amoxicillin, or cefuroxime axetil.

Looking ahead to recovery

Rest and take antibiotics as prescribed. Recovery may take several weeks or longer.

Some people wonder if there is a test to confirm that they are cured, but there is no such test. Retesting for Lyme disease is not recommended because blood tests might be positive for months or years after you have been treated. A positive test doesn't mean you are still infected. It simply means that your immune system remembers your infection.

You can get Lyme disease again if you are bitten by another infected tick, so protect yourself from tick bites.

For more information see www.cdc.gov/Lyme and www.cdc.gov/Ticks
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child will be going on field trips this spring as well as will continue to play outdoors for recess. Ticks are suspected to be very prevalent this year, and are most active in April to September; therefore we want to advise you of what to look for if your child after your child returns home from school. This information has been taken from the Center for Disease Control’s web site, http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/.

While most ticks are harmless and don’t require medical treatment, some ticks (like the deer tick, lone star tick and others) can carry harmful germs and cause diseases like Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, and Ehrlichiosis. The deer tick is tiny, and no larger than a pencil point. Other ticks are larger and easier to find on the skin.

Think Prevention

- **Wear appropriate clothing:** please see attached page for more information.
- **Conduct a full-body tick check** Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in their hair.
- **Examine clothes and gear.** Ticks can ride into the home on clothing, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine coats, and day packs. Tumbling clothes in a dryer on the highest heat for at least one hour may help kill remaining ticks.
- **Shower soon after being outdoors.** Showering within two hours of coming indoors has been shown to reduce your risk of being bitten by a tick.
- **Repellents** containing 20% or more DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, and they can protect up to several hours. **Always follow product instructions!** Parents should apply this product to their child before school, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.

What to do if you find a tick attached:

If the tick is still attached to the skin, remove it:

- Using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the head of the tick close to the skin.
- Firmly and steadily pull the tick straight out of the skin.
- Do not twist the tick or rock it from side to side while removing it.
- Put tick in a sealed container or zip-locked bag and save it to show the doctor if your child becomes ill.
- **Do not use petroleum jelly or a hot match to kill and remove the tick.**
- Wash area with soap and water or swab the area with rubbing alcohol.

Signs & Symptoms of Tick-Related Diseases:

- **Fever/chills:** With all tickborne diseases, patients can experience fever at varying degrees and time of onset.
- **Aches and pains:** Tickborne disease symptoms include headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. With Lyme disease you may also experience joint pain. The severity and time of onset of these symptoms can depend on the disease and the patient's personal tolerance level.
- **Rash**

Tick-borne diseases can result in mild symptoms treatable at home to severe infections requiring hospitalization. Although easily treated with antibiotics, these diseases can be difficult for physicians to diagnose. However, early recognition and treatment of the infection decreases the risk of serious complications. Please see your doctor, immediately, if your child may have been bitten by a tick and experiences any of the symptoms described above.

Seek Medical Care if:

- The tick might have been on the skin for more than 6-8 hours.
- Part of the tick remains in the skin after attempted removal.
- A rash of any kind develops (especially the red-ringed bull’s eye rash or red dots on wrists and ankles).
- The bite area looks infected (increasing redness, warmth, swelling, pain or oozing pus).
- Symptoms like fever, headache, fatigue, chills, stiff neck or back or muscle or joint aches develop.

For more information about ticks, visit the Center for Disease Control Site http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html

Be Aware and Continue to Enjoy the Outdoors!!!

Your School Nurses

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Appropriate Dress for Field Experiences

- Wear a hat
- Wear a long sleeved shirt
- Tuck shirt in
- Wear long pants
- Wear tall socks, Tuck pants into socks
- Wear shoes or boots that can get wet & muddy

NO sandals, flip flops or bare feet