

# Ticks

Summer may be over but there is still plenty of time to enjoy the great outdoors. As you head out, it is important to remember to take preventive measures against ticks.

Ticks are arachnids, relatives of spiders that live in wooded areas, brushy fields, along trails and around homes. They are also parasites that survive by feeding on the blood of animal hosts, including humans. Through their feeding, ticks can significantly impact the quality of life and health of humans and pets. Most importantly, some species of ticks may transmit diseases, which can result in mild to serious illness or death. Proper protection from ticks and prompt removal are crucial to preventing infection.

## Preventing tick bites for you and your family

While it is a good idea to take preventive measures against ticks year-round, be extra vigilant in warmer months (April through September) when ticks are most active.

### Avoid direct contact with ticks

- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails.

### Repel ticks

- Use repellents that contain 20 to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding their hands, eyes and mouth.
- Use products that contain permethrin for clothing. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents. It remains protective through several washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and remains protective for up to 70 washings.
- Find information for other repellents registered by the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#).

### Find and remove ticks from your body

- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that are crawling on you.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas. 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 gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats and day packs.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill remaining ticks. (Some

research suggests that shorter drying times may also be effective, particularly if the clothing is not wet.)

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## **Removing ticks**

If you find a tick attached to your skin, there's no need to panic. Several tick removal devices are available on the market, but a plain set of fine-tipped tweezers will remove a tick effectively.

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub or soap and water.
- Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Avoid folklore remedies such as "painting" a tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly or using heat to make the tick detach from your skin. Your goal is to remove the tick as quickly as possible - do not wait for it to detach.

If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your healthcare provider. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred and where you most likely acquired the tick.

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## **Preventing tick bites on your pets**

Dogs are susceptible to tick bites and tick-borne diseases. With the exception of Lyme disease, vaccines are not available for most of the tick-borne diseases that dogs can get, and they can't keep the dogs from bringing ticks into your home. For these reasons, it's important to use a tick-preventive product on your dog.

Tick bites on dogs may be hard to detect. Signs of tick-borne disease may not appear for 7 to 21 days or longer after a tick bite, so watch your dog closely for changes in behavior or appetite if you suspect that your pet has been bitten by a tick.

To reduce the chances that a tick will transmit disease to you or your pets:

- Check your pets for ticks daily, especially after they spend time outdoors.

- If you find a tick on your dog, remove it right away.
- Ask your veterinarian to conduct a tick check at each exam.
- Talk to your veterinarian about tick-borne diseases in your area.
- Reduce tick habitat in your yard.
- Talk with your veterinarian about using tick preventives on your pet.

Note: Cats are extremely sensitive to a variety of chemicals. Do not apply any insect acaricides or repellents to your cats without first consulting your veterinarian.

### **Kill ticks on dogs**

A pesticide product that kills ticks is known as an acaricide. Acaricides that can be used on dogs include dusts, impregnated collars, sprays or topical treatments. Some acaricides kill the tick on contact. Others may be absorbed into the bloodstream of a dog and kill ticks that attach and feed.

### **Repel ticks on dogs**

A repellent product may prevent the tick from coming into contact with an animal at all or have anti-feeding effects once the tick comes into contact with the chemical, thus preventing a bite.

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## **Preventing ticks in your yard**

### **Create a tick-safe zone through landscaping**

You can make your yard less attractive to ticks depending on how you landscape. Here are some simple landscaping techniques that can help reduce tick populations:

- Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- Place a 3 foot wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas and around patios and play equipment. This will restrict tick migration into recreational areas.
- Mow the lawn frequently and keep leaves raked.
- Stack wood neatly and in a dry area (discourages rodents that ticks feed on).
- Keep playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees and place them in a sunny location, if possible.
- Remove any old furniture, mattresses or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.

### **Apply pesticides outdoors to control ticks**

A single springtime application of an acaricide (tick pesticide), such as bifenthin, can greatly

reduce the number of ticks in your yard.

If you have concerns about applying acaricides:

- Check with [local health officials](#) about the best time to apply acaricide in your area.
  - Identify rules and regulations related to pesticide application on residential properties:
    - [Ohio Department of Agriculture Pesticide and Fertilizer Regulation Section](#)
    - [United States Environmental Protection Agency Pesticide Program](#)
  - Consider using a professional pesticide company to apply pesticides at your home.
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