

# “My kids love to play outside. How can I keep them safe from the dangers of ticks?”

Not all ticks spread diseases, but it is very important to know the facts to protect yourself and your family.



Ticks are tiny creatures that can cause serious health problems if they infect you. Tick season begins in early spring and goes right through the fall months.

## What is a tick?

- Ticks are external parasites which attach themselves to the skin or fur of animals and can easily transfer to humans.
- Ticks are found mostly in wooded and grassy areas where there is a lot of wildlife.

## Why are ticks dangerous?

- Although not all ticks carry diseases, the ones that do can cause serious health problems.
- The spread of infections from ticks is growing across the U. S. Lyme disease is the most common, but there are many others, including Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Tick-borne relapsing fever and Colorado tick fever.
- If a tick bite is not treated early enough, the effects can be life-threatening.

## Lyme disease facts

- Two types of ticks carry Lyme disease: deer ticks and western black-legged ticks.
- In order for a human to become infected, the tick must be attached for at least 36 hours. Look for a round red rash that will spread from the bite location.
- Symptoms can begin any time from one day to a month after the bite has occurred. These symptoms are characterized as flu-like and may include:
  - excessive fatigue
  - headaches
  - sore muscles and joints
  - numbness in the extremities
  - fever
  - serious allergic reactions and paralysis (rare)

## Protecting yourself from ticks

- Clear excess brush, wood piles and tall grasses from the areas around your home. Environmentally-friendly sprays are available to treat your yard.
- Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants. Wear insect repellents that have DEET products in them. Always follow the label instructions. Used properly, DEET products should not cause harm.
- Check your arms, legs, clothes and head close to the scalp when you go inside. Make sure to check children and pets daily. Ticks can be very small and difficult to see.

## How to remove a tick

- Do not smother a tick with any substance or burn the tick while it's on your body. This could cause the tick to release infected fluid into the skin.
- Find the head of the tick which is embedded into your body.
- Use pointed tweezers, a tissue or gloves to grab as close to the head as possible. Don't use your bare hands. Don't pull on a swollen tick's body.
- Do not twist the tick when pulling out of the skin. Pull it straight out until the mouth lets go. Try to remove the whole tick.
- Wash the area with warm water and soap.

See your primary care provider if you can't remove the tick.