

Tick Advice: How to avoid these bloodsuckers

A tick is a small blood-sucking mite. It normally lives on blood from wild animals but sometimes it attaches itself to humans. Occasionally the tick carries a small bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi* in its stomach. This can cause Lyme disease, an infection that can affect the skin, cause partial paralysis of the face (Bells Palsy) and serious illness of the nervous system, joints and heart.



They hide in grass and high vegetation just waiting for you to walk by. And even though they are small and hard to spot, they can affect your health. Awareness is key to preventing Lyme disease. Do tick checks after being outside, and if you find one, bring it to the address listed below.

Lyme disease is an infection that is spread by certain ticks. Risk factors include deer ticks or a nymph or female tick. Symptoms of the illness in humans include red, bull's-eye rash, fatigue, fever, flulike symptoms, headaches and sore muscles and joints.

Transmission of the disease begins around the 36th hour of being attached. The risk increases significantly after the 48th hour. Vector Control is able to tell you how long the tick was attached, and if there is a need for treatment.

Not all ticks carry disease but can potentially carry diseases, Deer ticks and dog ticks are both active now, and will remain active throughout the spring and into summer.

The way in which a tick is removed from the body is important. Do not squeeze the body of the tick, or use heat or solvents as this will increase the chance of the tick regurgitating. The best way to remove a tick is grabbing at the mouthparts with needle-nose tweezers.

Since dogs spend a good amount of time running and playing outside, the threat of Lyme disease is lurking for them just like for humans.

Prevention tips:

- Remove brush, leaves, and tall grass from your property.
- Deer control is important. Having physical barriers to steer deer away from your property as well as removing plants deer favor can help keep ticks from your yard.
- Long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into socks, light-colored clothing, and a hat can reduce the chances of finding a tick on your body.
- Avoid tick-infested areas, especially in May, June and July when the tick population is high.
- Walk in the center of trails and avoid grass and brush whenever possible.
- Always examine yourself and your clothes as well as your kids and pets after walking or playing outdoors.

Where to bring ticks: Contact the Cooperative Extension of Somerset County Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, located on 310 Milltown Road Bridgewater, NJ 08807-3587 or call 908.526.6293 between the hours of 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Services are FREE.