

Ticks Can Make You Sick

It's June. It's time to enjoy the great outdoors. Walking in nature parks and in the woods is beneficial to your health but we want to help you avoid a tiny bite from a little tick that could make you sick.

Blacklegged ticks (deer ticks) are known to carry Lyme disease. They have been found in Western Canada, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, fatigue and a skin rash. Often, the first symptom is a rash near the tick bite that may look like a bull's-eye target. Symptoms usually appear seven to 10 days after a bite but the range is between three and 30 days.

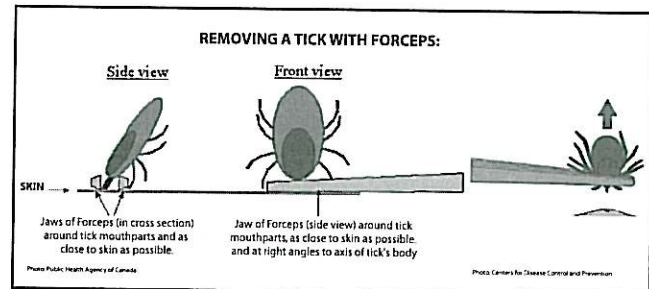
Most tick bites do not require medical attention but, if you develop symptoms, you must seek medical attention since, if Lyme disease occurs, antibiotics are necessary to prevent complications. Early treatment almost always results in full recovery.

It is suspected that ticks are carried by migratory birds and ticks can be found in the woods, fields and yards on shrubs and tall grass. The good thing is they are somewhat inactive. A tick transfers to the legs of animals or humans as they brush past. To protect you from tick bites Health Canada (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/) gives these precautions:

- Wear protective clothing to limit access of ticks to your skin. Clothing should include enclosed shoes, long-sleeved shirts that fit tightly around the wrist and are tucked into pants, and long-legged pants tucked into socks or boots. Choose light coloured clothing as it helps you spot the tiny bugs.
- Insect repellents containing DEET are safe and can effectively repel ticks. Repellents can be applied to clothing as well as exposed skin but should not be applied to skin underneath clothing. Always read and follow label directions.

- Check for ticks on clothing and skin after being in tick-infested areas. A daily total-body inspection and prompt removal of attached ticks (i.e., within 18 to 24 hours) can reduce the risk of infection. Blacklegged ticks are very small so be sure to look carefully. Do not forget to check children and pets too.

If you do find a tick, don't be alarmed, although it is important to carefully remove the tick using tweezers. Grasp the tick's head and mouth parts as close to the skin as possible and pull slowly until the tick is removed. Do not twist or rotate the tick and try not to squash, crush or damage its body during removal.



After removing ticks, wash the site of attachment with soap and water or disinfect it with alcohol or household antiseptic. Note the date of the tick bite and try to save the tick in an empty pill vial or doubled zip-lock bag.

Most often tick bites do not require medical attention. Lyme disease is rare but, if you see the bull's eye or become sick, seek medical attention. If you saved the tick, be sure to take it with you to the doctor's office and tell your doctor where and when you were bitten by the tick.

There is no reason to avoid the great outdoors. Follow these precautions and do a full body check after returning home. Remember to check your pets every day. They will most likely enjoy the added attention.