

# Tick Tips

Protect your family from tick-borne diseases



Spring is a time when many people spend more time outdoors, so it's important to remember how to prevent tick bites.

Some of the more common diseases that you can get from a tick bite include:

- [babesiosis](#)
- [ehrlichiosis](#)
- [Lyme disease](#)
- [Q-fever](#)     [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#)
- [Southern tick-associated rash illness](#)
- [tick-borne relapsing fever](#)
- [tularemia](#)

Other diseases that you can get from a tick in the United States include anaplasmosis, Colorado tick fever, and Powassan encephalitis.

Some species and some life stages of ticks are so small that they can be difficult to see, but all hungrily look for animals and, sometimes, people to bite. Depending on the species, you can find ticks in various environments, often in or near wooded areas. You may come into contact with ticks when walking through infested areas or by brushing up against infested vegetation (such as leaf litter or shrubs). Ticks also feed on mammals and birds, which play a role in maintaining ticks and the pathogens they carry.

Tick-borne diseases can occur worldwide. Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family:

## Protect yourself from tick bites



**Tuck pants into socks to help keep ticks from biting.**

**Avoid tick-infested areas.** Many local health departments, parks, and cooperative extension services have information about the areas most infested with ticks. If you are in a tick-infested area, walk in the center of the trails to avoid contact with vegetation.

**Wear light-colored clothing,** which allows you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing. Tuck your pant legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up inside of your pant legs. Some ticks can crawl down into shoes and are small enough to crawl through most socks. When traveling in areas with [lone star ticks](#) (which are associated with [Southern tick-associated rash illness](#), [ehrlichiosis](#), and [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#)) you should examine your feet and ankles to ensure that ticks are not attached.

**Use chemical repellent with DEET or permethrin and wear protective clothing.** Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on boots and clothing. When used in this manner, the repellent will be protective for several days. Repellents containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, but they protect for only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. **Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding the hands, eyes, and mouth.** An alternative to DEET, picaridin, has recently become available in the United States. Picaridin has limited data published for tick repellency, but it may provide suitable protection.

For detailed information about using DEET on children, see [West Nile Virus: What You Need to Know about Mosquito Repellent](#).

For detailed information about tick prevention and control, see [Lyme Disease Prevention and Control](#).

### Perform daily tick checks

**Check your body for ticks after** being outdoors, even in your own yard. Conduct a body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas by searching your entire body for ticks. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body and remove any tick you find (see the "Safely remove ticks" section below for instructions on removing ticks). Check these parts of your body and your child's body for ticks:

- Under the arms
- In and around the ears
- Inside belly button
- Back of the knees
- In and around the hair
- Between the legs
- Around the waist

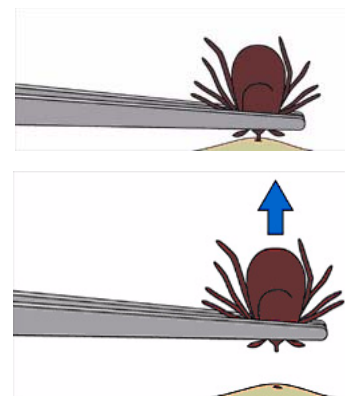
**Check your children for ticks**, especially in the hair, when returning from potentially tick-infested areas. See the list above for the places on your child's body to check for ticks. Remove any tick you find on your child's body.

**Check your clothing and pets for ticks.** Ticks may be carried into the house on clothing and pets. Both should be examined carefully, and any ticks that are found should be removed. Placing clothes into a dryer on high heat effectively kills ticks. See the "Prevent ticks on animals" section of this page for more information.

### Safely remove ticks

Early tick removal may reduce the risk of infection of some tick-borne diseases. Follow the steps below to safely remove ticks from animals and humans:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers and protect bare hands with a tissue or gloves to avoid contact with tick fluids.
2. Grab the tick close to the skin. Do not twist or jerk the tick, as this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin.
3. Gently pull straight up until all parts of the tick are removed.
4. After removing the tick, wash your hands with soap and water (or waterless alcohol-based hand rubs when soap is not available). Clean the tick bite with an antiseptic such as iodine scrub, rubbing alcohol, or water containing detergents.



Watch for signs of illness such as rash or fever, and see a health care provider if these develop.

For fully detailed information about tick removal, see the [Rocky Mountain spotted fever Web site](#).

## Reduce ticks in your yard



### Tick barrier at edge of yard.

(Image courtesy Kirby Stafford III, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station)

**Modify your landscape to create Tick-Safe Zones.** Some ticks, such as deer ticks, need moist environments to survive; they die quickly where it is dry. Thus, there are a few tricks you can use to keep ticks away from areas of the yard where you spend the most time. Laying down wood chips or gravel where lawns butt up against wooded areas can reduce the number of ticks on grassy areas by creating a drying barrier between the more heavily tick-infested vegetation areas and the grass.

**Control vegetation and maintain a clean yard.** Mow the lawn, clear brush and leaf litter, keep the ground under bird feeders clean, and stack woodpiles neatly in dry areas.

**Provide a vegetation-free play area.** Keep play areas and playground equipment away from away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation.

Landscaping diagram shows ways to create tick-safe zones in your yard.

[View full-size image](#)

(Image courtesy Kirby Stafford III, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station)

**Use a chemical control agent.** Effective tick control chemicals are available for use by the homeowner, or they can be applied by a professional pest control expert. If you use the household products, be sure to follow the instructions carefully to provide the appropriate amount and distribution of the chemical.

**Use bait boxes to treat rodents.** "Bait boxes" that treat wild rodents with acaricide (pesticides that kill ticks) are now available for home use. Properly used, these boxes have been shown to reduce deer ticks around homes by more than 50%. The treatment is similar to products used to control ticks and fleas on pets and does not harm the rodents. Bait boxes are available from licensed pest control companies in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

**Prevent deer from bringing ticks into your yard.** Deer can carry ticks that spread [Lyme disease](#), anaplasmosis, [babesiosis](#), [ehrlichiosis](#), and [Southern tick-associated rash illness](#). Removing plants that attract deer and constructing physical barriers may help discourage tick-infested deer from coming near homes.

## Prevent ticks on animals

Prevent family pets from bringing ticks into the home. Maintain your family pet under a veterinarian's care. Two of the ways to get rid of ticks on dogs and cats are putting on tick medicine or using a tick collar. Be sure to use these products according to the package instructions. For more information on animals and health, see the [CDC Healthy Pets, Healthy People](#) Web site.

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