

# Ticks

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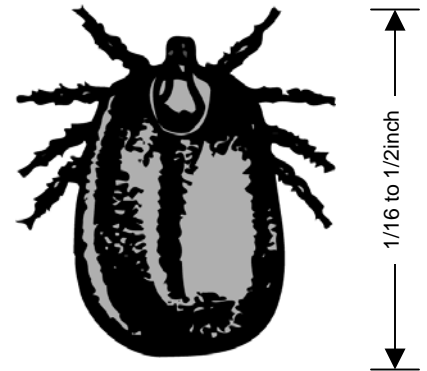
## The tick problem

Ticks are blood-sucking bugs usually found in forests and fields from spring until late fall. Tick bites can cause serious illnesses such as Colorado Tick Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Relapsing Fever, Lyme Disease, Haemorrhagic Fever, Tick Typhus and Tick-borne Encephalitis. Different varieties of ticks range in size from a grain of sand to 1/2 inch long.

## How to avoid ticks

When hiking, backpacking, fishing, or just spending time in forests or fields, there are three steps to prevent tick-borne illnesses:

- 1) check both you and your pets for ticks on a regular basis
- 2) wear protective, light-colored clothing, such as long pants tucked into socks and long-sleeved shirts
- 3) apply insect repellent to you, your clothing and your pet. Repellents with “permonone”: as an active ingredient on the label are safe for people. Ask your veterinarian for advice on effective tick repellents for your pets.



Ticks usually roam the body for a while before they attach themselves to your skin to feed. As a tick feeds, it buries its head under your skin. The longer a tick feeds, the harder it is to remove the entire tick; therefore, ticks should be removed as soon as possible.

To safely remove a tick:

- 1) Grasp the tick with tweezers as closely to the head of the tick as possible. (The tick’s head can remain imbedded in the skin if the tick is not removed properly.)
- 2) Slowly turn the tick over, in a lifting and twisting motion. This will cause the mouth of the tick to release its hold.
- 3) Wash the area with soap and water.

DO NOT burn or smother the tick to remove it! These two methods increase risk of infection and should not be used. If you have problems removing a tick, contact your doctor.

## Diseases spread by ticks

Although most tick bites are harmless, some can cause serious illnesses. If you have flu-like symptoms or develop a rash after being bitten by a tick, see your doctor immediately because you may have a tick-borne illness. Some of the more common tick-borne illnesses in the United States are listed below.

- **Colorado Tick Fever** is common in the Rocky Mountain region. Symptoms include high fever, chills, severe headache and fatigue. You will recover in 7 to 10 days without treatment. If symptoms persist longer than 10 days, see your doctor.
- **Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever** is a serious illness. Oddly enough, it does not occur very often in the Rocky Mountain region, but occurs more often in the southern part of the United States. About three days after the person has been bitten by the tick, a rash develops and spreads to most of the body. Treatment is by antibiotics.

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## *Ticks (continued)*

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- **Relapsing Fever** is spread by a different kind of tick. These ticks only feed at night, so they are rarely seen. Symptoms include high fever, chills and fatigue. Symptoms last about five days and then reappear over a period of weeks. Treatment is by antibiotics.
- **Lyme Disease** is the most common tick-borne disease in America with most of the cases occurring in the Eastern United States. It is a difficult illness to diagnose and, if left untreated, can result in painful and crippling arthritic conditions, nerve damage, brain disorders, heart trouble, and sometimes death. A few days after the bite occurs, flu-like symptoms develop. Within a month, a rash that looks like a bulls-eye may occur around the bite. The more serious symptoms are seen months to years later if the illness is not treated with antibiotics early. Treatment for the later stages of the illness is complicated. *A preventative vaccine (called Lymerix) is available. It requires a series of three shots and protects against Lyme disease for 20 years.*