

TICKS

- Ticks are all around us. They live in grassy areas (lawns) as well as in brush and wooded areas.
- They often come inside houses on pets or clothing.
- Ticks cannot “jump”, but rather wait patiently on grasses for a “warm” body to pass. When the “warm” body (a.k.a. host) comes close enough, the tick uses especially designed hooks on its legs to attach itself to the new host.
- Ticks can move surprisingly fast (for their size), and can travel from ankle to neck in less than an hour.
- Depending on tick species and stage of growth, ticks can be the size of a period on this page, or as big as a pea when engorged with blood.
- Ticks generally require less than 12 hours to begin feeding (burrow through skin layers to the blood supply underneath) depending on the thickness of the skin. They seek thin-skinned areas.
- Tick mouth parts are designed to keep a firm hold on the host (they have reverse serrations), and cannot be easily removed from the host either by the tick or by you.
- All tick species can carry disease. The predominant species in our area are the Dog Tick and the Deer Tick.

FINDING A TICK

- Ticks are active anytime the air temperature is above freezing (>32°). The warmer the temperature, the more active ticks are.
- You need to “look” to find. Everyone who goes outside, or has household pets that go outside, should do a “head-to-toe, crack-and-crevice” tick search EVERY night – EVERYONE...
- Finding a tick early and removing it is much better than finding it after it has begun to feed.

REMOVING A TICK

- NEVER grasp a tick by its abdomen when removing. Doing so squeezes the tick’s stomach contents into your body, which increases the likelihood of a significant medical problem.
- ALWAYS use fine forceps (jeweler’s type) to grasp the tick as close to your skin (between the head/mouth parts and you) as possible. Use a gentle, steady pull until one of two things happens: either the tick will let go, or the tick will separate from its mouth parts, leaving them in your skin. You should have any embedded mouth parts removed.
- Clean the area and apply a topical antibiotic as you would for a splinter.
- Watch the area for signs of infection (red, swollen, painful) or a reaction to the tick bite (any rash, and especially a rash that looks like a bullseye). If any of these occur, contact your physician or come to the Emergency Department.
- NEVER apply alcohol, grease, nail polish, glue, etc. to the tick in an effort to have it let go.
- NEVER apply flame, lighted cigarettes or other heat sources to the tick. This most often results in burning yourself and/or killing the tick – but not having it let go.



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