



Ways to Safeguard Against Ticks

The two species of ticks most likely to be encountered in Connecticut are the wood or American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) and the smaller black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) often called the deer tick as white-tailed deer are a favored host. Both carry diseases but it is the smaller black-legged one that can transmit Lyme disease, human babesiosis and human granulocytic anaplasmosis. Late spring through summer is typically the time of year for greatest human exposure to Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, although they can be active any time the temperature is above 30°F.

A spike in infected ticks evaluated in late winter at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station testing laboratory portends an active Lyme disease season this year. In past years, the rate of infected ticks has been between 28 percent and 32 percent — with about 27 percent in each of the past five seasons. With more than 800 ticks tested, the laboratory reports almost 38 percent of the ticks have tested positive for Lyme.

Lyme Disease may cause fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and a skin rash (sometimes shaped like a bullseye). Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics. If not treated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system, and be difficult to treat.

If you go walking in wooded or brushy areas, check your clothes and skin for ticks often. Also, inspect your kids if they've been playing outside (and your pets, too).

- When walking in wild areas, keep to the center of paths and avoid brushy or grassy areas
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing so ticks will be more visible.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into boots or socks.
- Spray exposed skin with a repellent that contains up to 30 percent DEET.
- Consider using a repellent at least around the bottoms of pants.

- A permethrin (0.5 percent) spray can be used on clothing, shoes, sneakers and other gear. Do NOT use directly on skin.
- Ticks attached to clothing can survive machine washing. To kill any ticks, tumble dry clothes on high heat for 10 minutes. If the clothes must be washed first, use hot water
- Pay close attention to hidden places like the back of your knees, groin, arm pits and scalp (ticks are tiny – often only the size of a poppy seed).
- Shower as soon as you get home to wash away unattached ticks and feel for bumps that might be embedded ticks
- If you find a tick attached to you, remove it right away and save the tick in a plastic bag – your doctor will want to see it if you develop symptoms
- To remove a tick, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends:
 - Use fine-tipped tweezers.
 - Grasp the tick close to the skin.
 - Pull steadily, with even pressure. A twist or other sudden movement could cause the tick's mouth parts to break off and remain in the skin.
 - Once removed, clean the area thoroughly with rubbing alcohol, iodine or soap and water.