

# T'is the Season for Ticks

**W**hen I was a kid we were told to avoid areas where there were Oak trees. This is a myth as ticks can be found in and about most grassy or treed areas. I removed a tick recently after mowing my lawn in an urban setting. Check yourself if you have been in any grassy area.

Most ticks do not carry diseases, and most tick bites do not cause serious health problems. But it is important to avoid and check for ticks, and to remove a tick as soon as you find it. Removing the tick completely may help you avoid diseases such as Lyme disease that the tick may pass on during feeding, or a skin infection where the tick bit you.

## HOW TO AVOID TICK BITES

Learn where ticks are most commonly found in your community. Avoid those areas if possible.

Cover as much of your body as possible when working or playing in grassy or wooded areas. Wear a hat, a long-sleeved shirt, and long pants with the legs tucked into your socks. Keep in mind that it is easier to spot ticks on light-coloured clothes.

Use insect repellents, such as products with DEET.

Clear leaves, brush and tall grasses from around your house and the edges of your yard or garden. This may help reduce ticks and the rodents that the ticks depend on.

In extreme situations call your local nursery or municipal extension office to see if your yard can be treated for ticks with nonchemical or environmentally safe methods.



## CHECKING FOR TICKS

When you come in from outdoors, check your clothing and all over your body for ticks, including your groin, head, and underarms. Comb your hair with a fine-toothed comb, or have someone check your scalp.

Check for ticks on any gear you had with you in the woods.

Check your children daily for ticks, especially during the summer months.

Check your pets for ticks after they've been outdoors. Your pets can carry infected ticks indoors where they might fall off your pet and attach to you.

## HOW TO REMOVE A TICK

Use fine-tipped tweezers to remove a tick. If you don't have tweezers, put on gloves or cover your hands with tissue paper, then use your fingers. Do not handle the tick with bare hands.

Grab the tick as close to its mouth (the part that is stuck in your skin) as you can. The body of the tick will be above your skin.

Do not grab the tick around its swollen belly. You could push infected fluid from the tick into your body if you squeeze it.

Gently pull the tick straight out until its mouth lets go of your skin. Do not twist the tick. This may break off the tick's body and leave the head in your skin.

Put the tick in a dry jar or ziplock bag and save it in the freezer for later identification if needed.

After the tick has been removed, wash the area of the tick bite with a lot of warm water and soap. A mild dishwashing soap works well. Be sure to wash your hands well with soap and water also.

NOTE: If you can't remove a tick, call your doctor.

You can use an antibiotic ointment. Put a little bit of ointment on the wound. The ointment will keep the wound from sticking to a bandage. If you get a skin rash or itching under the bandage, stop using the ointment. The rash may mean you had an allergic reaction to the ointment.

Some ticks are so small it is hard to see them. This makes it hard to tell if you have removed the tick's head. If you do not see any obvious parts of the tick's head where it bit you, assume you have removed the entire tick, but watch for symptoms of a skin infection.

If you have a bullseye rash, headache, joint pain, fever, or flu-like symptoms, this could mean you have an illness related to a tick bite. If you have any of these symptoms, or symptoms of a skin infection, call your doctor.

### WHAT TO AVOID - DO NOT TRY TO:

Smother a tick that is stuck to your skin with petroleum jelly, nail polish, gasoline, or rubbing alcohol.

Burn the tick while it is stuck to your skin.

Smothering or burning a tick could make it release fluid, which could be infected, into your body and increase your chance of infection.

There are some tick-removal devices that you can buy. If you are active outdoors in areas where there are a lot of ticks, you may want to consider buying such a device.

~ Information found on Health links BC

*Bill White has been associated with work place safety committees for 25 years in the government and the private sectors*

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