

# Ticks & Lyme Disease

With the return of warm weather to New England comes the return of ticks and concerns about Lyme disease. Not every tick bite presents a risk of Lyme disease. Only deer ticks can transmit the disease, and a tick must be attached to a person for 24-48 hours to be able to transmit the organism that causes it. Studies show that even in areas with high rates of the disease, the risk of infection after a deer tick bite is so low that prophylactic (preventative) antibiotics are not indicated.

## How do I remove a tick?

- Remove a tick from your skin as soon as you notice it. Use tweezers to firmly grasp the tick very close to your skin. With steady motion, pull the tick's body away from your skin. Clean the area with soap and water.
- Avoid crushing the tick's body and **do not be alarmed if tick remnants remain in the skin. Once these parts are separated from the tick's body, they can no longer transmit disease and the remnants will work their way out on their own.** If you accidentally crush the tick, clean the area with soap and water or alcohol.
- A Tick Twister®, or related tool, may also be purchased to help with removal. Such tools can be found at pharmacies.
- Do not use a lit match, petroleum jelly, fingernail polish, or rubbing alcohol to try to make the tick back out. The materials are either ineffective or could cause the tick to release infection into the skin.
- Saving the tick for lab analysis is not useful or recommended. There is no role for sending a tick to a lab to find out if it carries the organism that causes Lyme disease, as this does not correlate with risk of transmission and does not change our medical management.



## How do I help prevent tick bites?

- Be aware of the areas where ticks live, such as areas with very low and high seasonal temperatures as well as high humidity. They are common in forests, grassy, or wooded areas. They can also be found near marshy areas, lakes, or oceans. Be careful if you walk or camp in tick-infested areas.
- When outdoors, wear long-sleeved shirts tucked into pants. The pants should be tucked into socks or boots. Wearing light colored clothes can make it easier to spot ticks. Use insect repellent.
- Check yourself and your child everyday for ticks. Pets should also be examined. When doing checks, remember that ticks like places that are warm and moist. Pay extra attention to areas like the backs of knees, armpits, groin, scalp, back of neck, and behind the ears.
- Take preventative measures...but continue to enjoy outdoor activities!

## How will I know if my child has Lyme disease?

Watch for the following signs & symptoms of Lyme disease and make an appointment to be evaluated if your child develops:

- A painless, non-itchy lesion that looks like a target (circular with some central clearing) that increases in size over several days. This may be the characteristic rash of Lyme, called erythema migrans, and usually occurs 1 ½ -2 weeks after the tick bite.
- Swelling of a joint
- Fever & flu-like symptoms (including muscle aches, joint pain, headaches, fatigue) that occur 7-21 days after the tick bite
- Facial droop on one side of the face

## For More Information

[www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks); [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org); [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)