



FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

Avoiding tick bites

The best way to avoid tick-borne disease is to avoid being bitten by ticks. Although there is a new vaccine against Lyme disease, it is not recommended for everyone, it isn't 100% effective, and it doesn't protect against other diseases carried by ticks.

If you live in or travel to areas where ticks are common, and you plan to spend time outdoors in the spring and summer, follow these simple instructions.

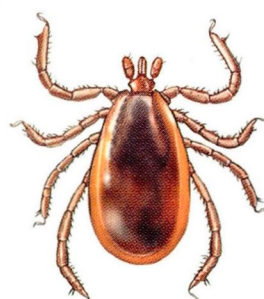
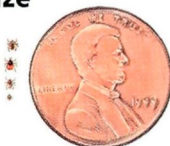
Wear protective clothing and insect repellent.

Wear a long-sleeved shirt and long trousers tucked into your socks or boots. Light-colored clothing is preferred because ticks are dark and are more easily seen against light-colored clothing. Spray your clothing and any exposed skin with insect repellent containing DEET (n,n-diethyl-m-toluamide). You can also apply the insecticide permethrin to your clothes, where it may kill ticks which it contacts.

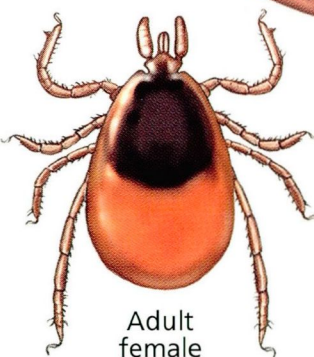
Inspect yourself for ticks.

A tick usually does not transmit disease unless it can remain attached for more than 36 hours. After spending time in a tick habitat,

Actual size



Ixodes dammini
Adult male



Adult female



Nymph

Larva

Enlarged 1200%

inspect your entire body for ticks once a day, and remove any ticks before they infect you. Make sure to check the scalp, armpits, waistline, and groin.

Remove any ticks you find.

If you find a tick, don't squeeze it or twist it off, because crushing the tick may release its infected bodily fluids. Instead, grasp it gently with tweezers near the skin and pull it off. Wash the bite site with soap and water.

Seek medical care if needed.

Most experts agree that it is not helpful to get antibiotics right after a tick bite, because most tick bites won't transmit any disease. The best course of action is to wait and see whether you develop any signs or symptoms. If a large red mark forms around the tick bite or if you develop fever, flulike symptoms, rash, or more severe illness, contact your doctor and report the tick bite. Your doctor can determine whether these symptoms might be caused by a tick-borne disease, and whether antibiotics will be needed.

For more information, see the Cleveland Clinic Department of Patient Education and Health information Web site, www.clevelandclinic.org/health.



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