

“Tick-Talk” from Your School Nurses

Camping, hiking, gardening and just playing outdoors are all great spring and summer activities, but don't forget about the ticks that may share your living and playing spaces! Massachusetts has had a large increase in the tick population over the past few years, and has also seen a rise in Lyme Disease and other tick-borne illnesses. It's important to practice prevention techniques to prevent tick bites to you and your pets.

In some species and life stages, ticks are so small that they can be difficult to see, but they all hungrily look for animals and people to bite! You can find ticks in various environments but they most often are in or near wooded areas. They hide under leaves, in grass and on branches.

Prevention!

There are some simple steps to protect you and your family:

Avoid tick-infested areas and sitting directly on the ground

Avoid sleeping with pets or allowing pets on the furniture—ticks can travel from your furry animals to the skin of you or your family.

Have your pets vet give you some medicine to keep the ticks away from your pet. Check them daily for ticks.

****Frequent tick checks are probably your best protection.***

Perform an entire body and clothing check on yourself and your children as soon as possible after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Use a mirror to view all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find.

****Removing ticks before they adhere to the skin prevents transmission of infection.***

Use EPA approved tick repellent on skin and clothing according to directions. Parents should apply this product to children avoiding the hands, eyes, and mouth. Use all natural substances if preferred to repel ticks—a lot of information can be found online.

What to do if you are bitten by a tick:

Remove an attached tick as soon as you notice it. Teach children to seek adult help for tick removal. Improper removal can increase the chances of infection transmission.

Use fine point tweezers and grab the head of the tick as close to the skin as possible. Remove the tick with a steady pull, straight up, away from the skin. **Never squeeze, twist, or yank the body of the tick.**

Watch for signs of illness such as rash, fever, or flu-like symptoms. Contact your healthcare provider if these develop. You may not see the “classic bull’s eye rash”.

Please refer to the CDC and MDPH websites for further information on tick-borne illnesses.