

Know the FACTS

Preventing Tick Bites

The best way to prevent tick-borne diseases is to avoid tick bites. In Ohio, the risk of tick-borne illnesses is highest from early spring through late fall. To reduce your risk of infection, take proactive steps such as protecting yourself against tick bites, checking your body and clothing for ticks, removing ticks promptly, and monitoring for any symptoms of illness.

Protect against tick bites

- Walk in the middle of trails and avoid areas with high grass, brush and leaf litter.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents and follow label instructions.
- Wear light colors and long pants, long sleeves and long socks.
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and tuck shirts into pants.



Check for ticks

- Examine your whole body, gear and pets for ticks and remove any you find before going indoors.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body.
- Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in their hair.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to more easily find and wash off any ticks that may be crawling on you.

Remove ticks as soon as you can

- The best way to remove a tick is to use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- Pull away from your skin with steady, even pressure.
- Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth-parts easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
- Dispose of a live tick by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.
- Wash your hands and the bite area with soap and water.
- Do not use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or any other home remedies to remove a tick. These methods do not work.

Watch for symptoms

Many tick-borne diseases can have similar signs and symptoms. The most common symptoms of tick-related illnesses are:

- Fever/chills
- Aches and pains
- Rash

If you are experiencing symptoms, please contact a physician immediately.



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Tickborne diseases

- Tick-borne diseases can result in mild symptoms treatable at home to severe infections requiring hospitalization.
- Although many can be treated with antibiotics, some diseases can be difficult for physicians to diagnose.
- Early recognition and treatment of the infection decreases the risk of serious complications.
- Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you have been bitten by a tick and experience any of the symptoms described here.

Lyme disease

- Lyme disease is caused by an infection with a bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In Ohio, *B. burgdorferi* is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick.
- Lyme disease cases are increasing in Ohio as the range of blacklegged tick populations continues to expand in the state and encounters with this tick occur more frequently, particularly in the forest habitats preferred by this tick.
- Early symptoms of Lyme disease:
 - Erythema migrans rash (bull's eye rash)
 - Headache
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Joint pain
 - Fatigue

Rocky Mountain spotted fever

- Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) is caused by an infection with a bacterium called *Rickettsia rickettsii*. In Ohio, *R. rickettsii* is transmitted to humans through the bite of the infected American dog tick.
- Early symptoms of RMSF:
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Rash
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Muscle pain
 - Stomach pain
 - Lack of appetite

Additional resources

Ohio Department of Health (ODH): odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/zoonotic-disease-program/diseases/tickborne-diseases

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): cdc.gov/ticks



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