

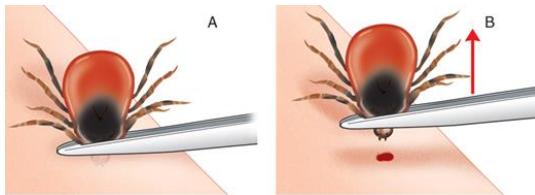
My Child Was Bitten by a Tick. Now What?

Tick bites are fairly common in the northeast, mid-Atlantic and north-central United States. In this handout, you will learn what to do if your child has a tick bite and when to seek care. You will also learn the symptoms of Lyme disease and how to prevent tick bites.

HOW DO I REMOVE THE TICK?

If you find a tick on your child, remove it as soon as possible using the following steps:

1. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible with fine-tipped tweezers. Be careful not to squeeze the tick's body.

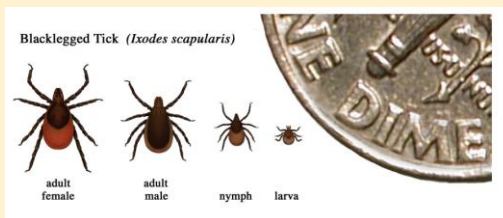


Source: <http://sinaiem.org/tick-removal/>

2. Slowly, gently and firmly pull the tick straight up from the skin. It is okay if small parts remain after removal.
3. After the tick is off, clean the skin with rubbing alcohol or other first aid cream.

Did you know...?

An adult deer tick (also called a blacklegged tick or *Ixodes scapularis*) is about the size of a sesame seed. A nymph (baby tick) is the size of a poppy seed. Deer ticks can spread Lyme disease, but in general, they need to be attached to a person for **at least 36 hours** before they can spread the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.



Source: <http://cdc.gov/lyme/transmission>

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE DOCTOR?

The tick's size, appearance and how long it has been attached to the skin are important in figuring out next steps for medical care, if needed. They are also important in figuring out your child's risk of Lyme disease or other diseases carried by ticks. In certain circumstances, your child's doctor may recommend taking one dose of an antibiotic to try to prevent Lyme transmission.

Call the doctor right away if:

- You are not sure if the tick is a deer tick.
- The tick was attached for more than 24 hours or you are not sure how long it has been there.
- The tick is larger than usual or has a swollen belly. This means the tick has attached itself to the skin and filled with blood.

Watch the tick bite for a rash for up to 30 days after tick removal. If you notice any changes, call the doctor.

DOES MY CHILD NEED ANTIBIOTICS?

Your child might need one dose of an antibiotic if the tick was attached for more than 24-36 hours and it has been less than 72 hours since the tick was removed. If your child shows symptoms of Lyme disease in the future (see next page), they might need a longer course of antibiotics.

Your child does **not** need antibiotics if:

- The tick is not a deer tick
- The tick was not swollen
- The tick was attached to the skin for fewer than 24 hours

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What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is an illness caused by bacteria that certain types of ticks carry. A person can get Lyme disease through a tick bite. The most common tick to carry Lyme disease bacteria in the northeast is a deer tick.

What are the Symptoms of Lyme Disease?

It can be hard to notice a tick bite because you often do not feel it. Because of this, it is important to know the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease.

Lyme disease happens in different stages, depending on the time between the tick bite and when symptoms develop.

Symptoms of Lyme disease include:

- A rash that starts out as a pink or red circle that grows over time. It might look like a bullseye.
- Headache
- Chills
- Fever
- Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Swollen glands
- Aches and pains in the muscles and joints

SHOULD I SEND THE TICK ALONG FOR TESTING?

Doctors do not routinely recommend sending ticks to the lab for testing. Because testing takes several days, it would not help a doctor decide about prescribing antibiotics. Also, not every tick bite transmits bacteria and not every transmission of bacteria leads to infection.

SHOULD MY CHILD GET A BLOOD TEST FOR LYME DISEASE?

Doctors do not recommend blood testing for Lyme right after a tick bite or in the early stages of Lyme disease. At that time, blood tests can be inaccurate.

HOW CAN I PREVENT TICK BITES AND LYME DISEASE?

- **Avoid places where ticks live.** Ticks live in and around wooded areas, including the grass that surrounds the woods. Animals (especially pets) can carry ticks into lawns and gardens and houses. Ticks crawl onto people as they brush against them. Ticks cannot jump or fly.
- **Cover arms and legs outdoors.** Wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when you and your family go outside. Keep ticks away from the skin by tucking pants into socks.
- **Use a bug spray with 20% DEET.** Look for products that contain no more than 30% DEET. Clothing can be sprayed with permethrin that stays on clothes for multiple washes.
- **Do daily tick checks!** After being outdoors, check for ticks on your child's body and clothes. Be sure to check the scalp and around the hairline, in and around the ears, waist, armpits, groin, in the belly button and backs of the knees.
- **Bathe or shower within 2 hours of coming indoors or as soon as possible after coming indoors** to wash off and more easily find ticks that may be crawling on the skin.

Pediatric Primary Care

Mass General Hospital for Children

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