Ticks Meeting Kit

Ticks Safety Talk

Ticks are small arachnids that bite to fasten themselves onto the skin and feed on blood. Ticks live in the fur and feathers of many birds and animals. There are many kinds of ticks in the United States and they can be found in virtually any area of the country. Tick bites occur most often during early spring to late summer and in areas where there are many wild animals and birds. It is important to avoid areas where ticks are found and prevent tick bites to avoid contracting the diseases they carry.

Tick Related Diseases

- Lyme disease
- Rocky Mountain spotted fever
- Tularemia
- Relapsing fever
- Colorado tick fever

THE RISK FACTORS FOR TICK BITES

People who go through grassy areas and woods are at higher risk for tick bites, especially during the months from April through September. People who travel through such areas out of necessity or for recreation are at higher risk than those that protect themselves with appropriate clothing like long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and DEET-containing repellents. In addition, people who have pets treated with flea and tick repellents decrease their risk of tick bites.

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

Unfortunately for the purpose of detection, the tick bite is usually painless and remains that way even after the tick stops the blood meal and falls off of the skin. Later, the bite site may develop

- Itching.
- burning.
- redness or red spot.
- localized intense pain like in the joints (some soft tick bites) in some individuals.

A few individuals may be sensitive or allergic to tick bites (tick saliva secretions) and develop

- rash near the bite.
- shortness of breath.
- Swelling.
- Numbness.
- paralysis (for example, neck stiffness).

However, the majority of individuals with tick bites develop no symptoms, and many people do not remember getting bitten.

Some immediate symptoms that infrequently or rarely develop during or immediately after a tick bite initially may be flu-like and include:

- fever.
- shortness of breath.
- weakness and/or achiness.
- Vomiting.
- swelling at the bite site and/or lymph nodes.
- weakness or paralysis.
- Headache.
- Confusion.
- palpitations.

TICK BITES – PREVENTION

Before You Go Outdoors

- **Know where to expect ticks.** Ticks live in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas, or even on animals. Spending time outside walking your dog, camping, gardening, or hunting could bring you in close contact with ticks. Many people get ticks in

their own yard or neighborhood.

- **Treat clothing and gear** with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear and remain protective through several washings. Alternatively, you can buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear.
- **Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellentsexternal icon c**ontaining DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone. EPA's helpful search toolexternal icon can help you find the product that best suits your needs. Always follow product instructions. Do not use products containing OLE or PMD on children under 3 years old.
- **Avoid Contact with Ticks**
  - Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
  - Walk in the center of trails.

After You Come Indoors

Check your clothing for ticks. Ticks may be carried into the house on clothing. Any ticks that are found should be removed. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If the clothes are damp, additional time may be needed. If the clothes require washing first, hot water is recommended. Cold and medium temperature water will not kill ticks.

Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats, and daypacks.

Shower soon after being outdoors. Showering within two hours of coming indoors has been shown to reduce your risk of getting Lyme disease and may be effective in reducing the risk of other tickborne diseases. Showering may help wash off unattached ticks and it is a good opportunity to do a tick check.

Check your body for ticks after being outdoors. Conduct a full body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas,

including your own backyard. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Check these parts of your body and your child’s body for ticks:

- Under the arms
- In and around the ears
- Inside belly button
- Back of the knees
- In and around the hair
- Between the legs
- Around the waist

FINAL WORD

People who live in areas where ticks have habitat must be careful and diligent in avoiding situations where ticks live. Common sense should always prevail in dealing with the tick menace.