

## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM TICKS

It's that time of year when ticks are active. Limiting exposure to ticks reduces the likelihood of infection with tickborne diseases. In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, prompt careful inspection and removal of crawling or attached ticks is an important method of preventing disease. It may take extended attachment time before organisms are transmitted from the tick to the host.

It is unreasonable to assume that a person can completely eliminate activities that may result in tick exposure. Therefore take the following precautions to protect yourself when exposed to natural areas where ticks are present:

- Wear light-colored clothing which allows you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing. Tuck your pants legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pants legs.
- Apply repellents to discourage tick attachment. Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on boots and clothing, and will last for several days. Repellents containing DEET (n, n-diethyl-m-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use DEET with caution on children.
- Conduct a body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas by searching your entire body for ticks. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find on your body.

Check children for ticks, especially in the hair, when returning from potentially tick-infested areas. Ticks may also be carried into the household on clothing and pets and only attach later, so both should be examined carefully to exclude ticks.

### To Remove Attached Ticks:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers or notched tick extractor, and protect your fingers with a tissue, paper towel, or latex gloves (see figure). Persons should avoid removing ticks with bare hands.
2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick; this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. *(If this happens, remove mouthparts with tweezers. Consult your health care provider if illness occurs.)*
3. After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.
4. Do not squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick because its fluids may contain infectious organisms. Skin accidentally exposed to tick fluids can be disinfected with iodine scrub, rubbing alcohol, or water containing detergents.

5. Save the tick for identification in case you become ill. This may help your doctor make an accurate diagnosis. Place the tick in a sealable plastic bag and put it in your freezer. Write the date of the bite on a piece of paper with a pencil and place it in the bag

More information can be found on the following websites:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>

The U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine:

<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/news/tickbornediseases.asp>