

This fact sheet addresses the prevention and treatment of tick bites, for the protection of participants in Church-sponsored outdoor activities, including camping, hiking, and so on.

What is a tick?

Ticks are small, hard-shelled creatures that survive by feeding on the blood of their hosts, which sometimes include humans.¹ Ticks vary in color and size. When engorged with blood, ticks can appear pink, purple, dark red, or grey in color. Engorged ticks can grow up to 11 mm (the size of a dime).² Ticks travel by crawling on the ground and in grasses and shrubs, where they wait for host animals. They can also be transported by animals.³

Some ticks carry harmful organisms. When a tick bites a human, the saliva, which carries pathogens, can enter the bloodstream and lead to Colorado tick fever, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, or Lyme disease.⁴



Top: Rocky Mountain wood tick (*D. andersoni*) male (left) and female (right). Bottom: Western Black-legged tick (*I. pacificus*) male (left) and female (right). Photo courtesy of Samuel Abbott, USU

Where are ticks found?

Tick species are widely distributed around the world and are most commonly found in brushy areas along the edges of fields and woodlands. They are also found near commonly traveled paths through grassy areas and shrubbery.⁵ While it is a good idea to take preventative measures against ticks year round, be extra vigilant in warmer months.⁶

Who is at risk for tick bites?

Those participating in outdoor activities in areas such as fields, woodlands, and places known to harbor large tick populations are at the highest risk for tick bites. Those participating in Boy Scout camps, Young Women camps, and other church-sponsored outdoor activities should take precautions to prevent tick bites.

How can tick bites be prevented?⁷

Avoid direct contact with ticks.

- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass or leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails, avoiding nearby foliage and brush.

Wear protective clothing.

- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and other clothing to help keep ticks away from the skin.
- Pull socks over the bottom of pant legs to protect against ticks found in low vegetation.
- Wear light-colored clothing to make it easier to find ticks that have been picked up.

Use repellents.

- Use repellents that contain 20% or more DEET on exposed skin for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always follow product instructions. Be sure to avoid getting DEET on the hands, eyes, or mouth.
- Apply repellents to pants and other areas of the lower body likely to come into contact with ticks.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing only. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks, and tents. Permethrin-treated items remain protective through several washings. Pretreated clothing is available and remains protective for up to 70 washings.

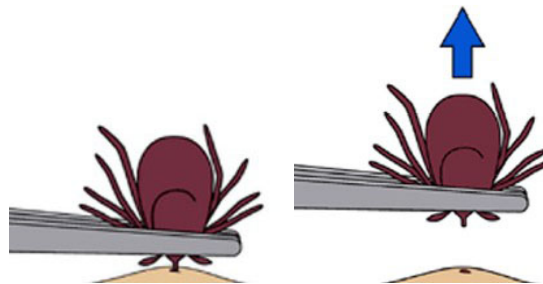
Conduct tick checks.

- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to find and wash off ticks that may be crawling on you.
- Always conduct a full-body tick check using a handheld or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon returning from tick-infested areas. Be sure to check under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in the hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, and then attach to a person later.

What to do if bitten by a tick⁸

Remove the tick.

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Do not grab or squeeze the main body of the tick; only grab the mouthparts.
- Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouthparts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouthparts easily, leave them alone and let the skin heal.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water. Use calamine lotion to ease itching.⁹
- Save the removed tick. Preserve it by placing it in a clean jar, vial, small plastic bag, or other sealed container with a moist cotton swab or preserve it in 70% ethanol alcohol. Identification of the tick will help a physician diagnose and treat an illness, should one occur. Discard the tick after one month.¹⁰
- Watch the bite location closely for any new rashes and monitor your health for any flu-like symptoms or sudden or relapsing illnesses. See your physician immediately if symptoms appear.



Source: http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html

Follow-up

- If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your physician. Bring the removed tick. Be sure to tell your physician about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred, and where you most likely acquired the tick.

Notes

1. See Cranshaw, W. S. and F. B. Peairs, "Colorado Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases," Colorado State University Extension, accessed May 15, 2012, <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05593.html>.
2. See "Appearance," Bada-UK, accessed June 14, 2012, <http://www.bada-uk.org/homesection/about/ticks/appearance.php>
3. See "Common Ticks," Illinois Department of Public Health, accessed May 17, 2012, <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pccommonticks.htm>.
4. See Cranshaw, W. S. and F. B. Peairs, "Colorado Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases," Colorado State University Extension, accessed May 15, 2012, <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05593.html>.
5. See "Colorado Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases," Colorado State University Extension, accessed May 15, 2012, <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05593.html>.
6. "Preventing Tick Bites," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 15, 2012, http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html.
7. "Preventing Tick Bites," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 15, 2012, http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html.
8. "Tick Removal," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 15, 2012, http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html.
9. *Young Women Camp Manual* (2002), 41
10. See "Tick Removal," U.S. Army Center for Health Protection and Preventive Medicine, accessed May 17, 2012, <http://www.smhc.army.mil/2008/Safety/Articles/Tickremoval.pdf>.