

How can you prevent tick bites?

Ticks don't jump or fly, but wait until an animal or person brushes past to climb on. Some simple steps to avoid coming into contact with ticks:

- Keep exposed skin to a minimum, wear long sleeves and tuck trousers into socks.
- Wear light coloured clothing so ticks are easier to spot and brush off.
- Walk on paths, avoid brushing against vegetation
- Avoid/take more care in areas with dense vegetation.
- You can use insect repellents containing DEET.

Reminder

Please remember to be tick aware.

- You could be exposed to ticks whenever you are outdoors and enjoying the countryside, even in your garden or the local park.
- Take extra care in, or avoid altogether, areas of dense vegetation.
- Ticks attach themselves to animals to feed and sometimes this can include people.
- You can prevent tick bites by walking on clearly defined paths, using insect repellent containing DEET and performing regular tick checks.
- Check yourself for ticks in the days after being outdoors.
- Some tick bites can result in infection so it is important to remove ticks as soon as possible.
- Ticks can be removed safely with tweezers or a tick removal tool.
- Do not squeeze, twist or squash the tick.
- If you have been bitten or recently spent time outdoors and start to feel unwell, contact your GP.

Further information and help

For further information please contact the Health Protection Team:

Email: wihealthprotection@nhs.net
Tel: 01851 708033 or 01870 603366

or visit: Lyme Disease Action
www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk

We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff.
- visit our website www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback or share your story at - www.patientopinion.org.uk or 0800 122 31 35.
- Tel. 01851 704704 (ext 2408) on a Tuesday and Friday afternoon between 1pm and 4pm.

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Disclaimer

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Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar
NHS Western Isles

Health Protection Team

Ticks and Lyme Disease



Important health advice and basic precautions
to help you and your family avoid tick bites

Ticks can transmit bacteria and viruses that cause diseases such as Lyme disease.

Although not all tick bites result in disease, it is important to know how to avoid tick bites and to take action if you or your family get bitten. Removing the tick as soon as possible reduces the chance of infection.

What are ticks?

Ticks are small, blood-sucking creatures which feed on many different types of birds and animals, including humans. During feeding they can cause infections that may lead to diseases. They are found in grassland, moorland and garden areas and are most common from April to October, but can be found at any time of year.

Ticks have a four stage cycle; the minute egg that hatches into a 0.5 mm, six-legged larva followed by a 1 mm, eight-legged nymph and finally the 10 mm engorged female. Larvae and nymph feed for 2 to 3 days then drop off into vegetation, where they develop and moult, ready for their next blood meal. Adult females feed for 10 days before laying eggs deep in the undergrowth.

Nymph is most likely stage of tick from which humans contract Lyme disease.



Source: G Charlesworth

What diseases do ticks carry?

Ticks carry many infective agents that can affect animals or humans or both. In Scotland, Lyme disease, also known as Lyme borreliosis, is the most common human disease transmitted by ticks.

There are also other tickborne diseases which in the UK mostly affect animals, but which on very rare occasions can also affect humans.

Tick check

Make it a habit to carry out a tick check – an easy way to make sure you haven't picked up any. Look over your clothes and body for any ticks to brush off.

When you get home, carry out a thorough check by removing your clothes and having a good look and feel for any ticks. Best practice is not to remove clothes in the bedroom, as ticks could remain on carpets/bedding.

Ticks prefer warm, moist places on your body, especially the groin area, waist, arm pits, behind the knee and along hair lines, so look out for anything as tiny as a freckle or a speck of dirt.

Young children are more commonly bitten on the head/scalp so they need to be carefully checked around the neck, behind the ears and along the hairline. Although it should be noted animal to animal/human transfer is very unusual, checking pet bedding is a good idea. A 40°C wash cycle does NOT kill ticks, so it is recommended to wash clothes after a tick check in a 50°C wash cycle (please check clothing temperature recommendations first).

Please note

If, following a tick bite, you feel unwell or develop a rash around the site of attachment please consult your GP.

What to do if you are bitten?

Infected ticks spread disease because bacteria and viruses can pass from the tick during the time they are attached to the animal/human.

If you do get bitten, removing the tick quickly and correctly can help reduce any potential risk.

DO:

- remove the tick as soon as possible BUT ensure the tick is **safely** removed by using a pair of fine tipped tweezers, or tick removal tool.
- grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
- pull upwards slowly and firmly, as mouthparts left in the skin can cause a local infection.
- apply antiseptic to the bite area, or wash with soap and water and keep an eye on it for several weeks for any changes.
- contact your GP if you begin to feel unwell with flu-like symptoms, joint pains, headache or fever and you were bitten by a tick or have recently spent time outdoors.

DO NOT:

- squeeze, twist or squash the tick.
- cover the tick with oils, lotions, chemicals or petroleum jelly.
- try to burn the tick off with a lit cigarette end or match head as these may increase the likelihood of the tick passing on a disease.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Lyme disease responds well to treatment with antibiotics and is better when treated early.
- If you do visit your GP then remember to tell them you have been bitten by a tick.
- There is no need for antibiotics or to see your GP if you have been bitten but have no other symptoms.
- A rash which spreads out from the bite, resembling a bulls-eye could be the initial sign of Lyme disease.