

“Tick-Talk” from your School Nurse

While you’re enjoying the health benefits of being active, take the time to protect your health by preventing the spread of tick-borne diseases!

Ticks are tiny bugs most likely found in brushy, wooded, or high grassy areas. Lyme disease, a bacterial infection caused by the bite of an infected deer tick, is the most commonly reported tick-borne disease. If it’s detected early enough, Lyme disease is curable. If it is not recognized early and treated, Lyme disease can cause serious joint, heart or central nervous system problems.

Prevention of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses begins with you! When you are out, take these steps to prevent being bitten by ticks:

Avoid areas with a lot of ticks

- Ticks prefer wooded and bushy areas with high grass and a lot of leaf litter. If you do enter a tick area, walk in the center of the trail to avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter.
- Although ticks can be active anytime the temperature is above freezing, take extra precautions in May, June, and July. This is when ticks that transmit Lyme disease are most active.

Keep Ticks Off Your Skin

- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and long socks to keep ticks off your skin. Light-colored clothing will help you spot ticks more easily. Tucking pant legs into socks or boots and tucking shirts into pants help keep ticks on the outside of clothing. If you’ll be outside for an extended period of time, tape the area where your pants and socks meet to prevent ticks from crawling under your clothes.
- Speak to your provider regarding the best insect repellent for you and your family. Use repellents according to the instructions given on the product label.

Check your skin and clothes for ticks every day

- Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks after coming inside. Pay particular attention to areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears.
 - Deer ticks are small! Adult ticks are approximately the size of a sesame seed. If you have poor vision, use a magnifying glass.
- If you find a tick attached to your skin, don’t panic. Use a pair of fine point tweezers to grip the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull straight out with steady pressure.
 - DO NOT touch the tick with your bare hands.
 - DO NOT squeeze the body of the tick as this may increase your risk of infection.
 - DO NOT put alcohol, nail polish remover or Vaseline on the tick.
 - DO NOT put a hot match or cigarette on the tick
 - DO NOT use your fingers to remove the tick.
- Remove ticks from your clothes before going indoors. To kill ticks that you may have missed, wash your clothes with hot water and dry them using high heat for at least one hour.
- If a tick is attached to your skin for less than 24 hours, your chance of getting Lyme disease is extremely small. But just to be safe, monitor your health closely after a tick bite. Talk to your provider if you develop a rash where you were bitten or experience symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, or sore and aching muscles after a tick bite.