Ticks Prevention and Tips

Tick bites are a common occurrence in New England, but with careful prevention and monitoring they are not a reason for alarm. When heading into the warmer months it is important to be prepared for various outdoor pests. Tick and insect repellants that contain up to 30% DEET are the most effective and are safe for children more than 2 months of age. Just remember to avoid applying to the face. If outside for a long time, DEET should be reapplied every 4-6 hours. DEET can be toxic if swallowed and should be stored safely out of reach of children. Insect repellents containing Picardin are an alternative to DEET. Please see our Summer Safety protocol for further information on bug spray use. Products that contain permethrin (Permame®) are available for application to clothing (not skin!), and can protect gear and clothing through several washes.

There are a few steps you can take before heading outside. When possible wear a hat, long-sleeved shirts and long pants. If going hiking, try to walk in the center of the trails and wear boots since ticks are found close to the ground. It is helpful to tuck your pants into your socks or boots. Limiting exposure of ticks to your skin and hair is key. Wearing light-colored clothing may make it easier to spot ticks that are crawling on your clothing.

ALWAYS perform a tick check when your children come in from playing outdoors and have them bathe as soon as possible, especially if bug spray has been applied. Although bathing will not remove ticks that are attached, it could wash off ticks that have not yet attached, enhance finding ticks on the skin, and reduce exposure to ticks retained in clothing. Ticks especially like to hide under the arms, in and around ears, belly buttons, behind the knees, in the groin area, on the waist and in hair. Don’t forget to check any gear that you may have brought outside as well. Ticks like to attach to items, clothing and pets!
You found a tick on your child- What to do:

If you find a tick embedded into your child’s skin all you need is a pair of tweezers. Try grabbing the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible and with steady pressure, slowly pull upward to pull the tick out. DO NOT try to bum the tick or use any other methods such as “painting” the tick with nail polish. Next, clean the bite area with soap and water. We recommend applying an antibacterial ointment as well. It is normal for the skin to be red and irritated at this point. Allow the site to heal, keep applying ointment and if the site looks worse in appearance after a couple days please give us a call.

It is important to try to ascertain when the bite occurred. This helps us at gauging your child’s risk for Lyme disease transmission. Our current office protocol is that if the tick has been attached for less than 24 hours, we recommend that a monitoring approach be used. Continue to watch the site for any spreading redness or signs of infection such as, warmth, discharge or pain. Your child should also be monitored for the next several weeks for any signs of illness such as unexplained fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches (flu-like illness) or a rash that consists of one or more enlarging rings.

If you think that the tick has been attached for longer than 24 hours, please give us a call and a Triage Nurse can review the situation with you. Remember, although our office may want you to notify us when there is a tick exposure for longer than 24 hours, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that ticks must be attached for 36-48 hours before the Lyme disease bacterium can be transmitted.

Please use this as a guide for your family during the warmer months of New England and remember that the risk of human infection is the greatest in late spring and summer. If you have any questions please contact us during office hours and speak to a Triage Nurse. We will be happy to answer any questions that you may have. We hope you enjoy the outdoors and have a safe and healthy summer!