



UK Health  
Security  
Agency



# Enjoy the outdoors but **'be tick aware'**



'Be tick aware' to avoid tick bites and know how to take action if you or your family get bitten by ticks



Tick sizes compared to a one penny coin

## What are ticks?

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. The size of a tick can vary, with a larva being as small as a tiny freckle, and fully fed females similar in size to a baked bean.

## Where do you find ticks?

Ticks survive in many habitats, but prefer moist areas with leaf litter or longer grass, like in woodland, grassland, moorland, heathland and some urban parks and gardens. Ticks don't fly or jump. They wait on vegetation for a host to pass by, and then climb on. They bite and attach to the skin and feed on blood for several days, before dropping off. Ticks are found throughout the year, but are most active between spring and autumn.

## Main health risks

- ticks can sometimes transmit microbes that may cause human diseases such as Lyme disease. It is important to be Lyme disease aware and see your GP promptly for diagnosis and treatment if you recognise the symptoms which can include:
  - a flu-like illness, fatigue and muscle and joint pain
  - a characteristic expanding red rash, erythema migrans (present in many but not all cases)
- you may not always remember being bitten by a tick, so if you have spent time outdoors and develop any of these symptoms, seek advice from your GP or dial NHS 111
- Lyme disease can be treated with a course of antibiotics. Without treatment, more serious conditions can develop such as swelling in some joints or problems with the nerves and heart, so prevention and early detection are key

## Avoiding ticks

- walk on clearly defined paths to avoid brushing against vegetation
- wear light-coloured clothes so ticks can be spotted and brushed off
- use repellents such as DEET
- carry out a tick check

## Carry out a tick check

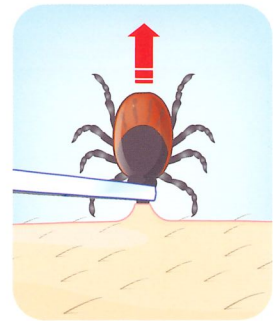
Make it a habit to check your clothes and body regularly for ticks when outdoors and again when you get home. Check your children and pets as well.

Areas that ticks may frequently be found include skin folds, armpits, groin, waistband area, back of the neck and hairline. Data from UKHSA's Tick Surveillance Scheme shows that adults are commonly bitten on the legs, whilst children are commonly bitten on the head or neck area. It is important to remember, however, that bites can occur on any part of the body and more than one tick can be attached at one time.

## If you have been bitten

- remove ticks as soon as possible
- the safest way to remove a tick is to use a pair of **fine-tipped** tweezers or a 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
- clean the bite area, and monitor it for several weeks for any changes
- contact your GP promptly if you begin to feel unwell with flu-like symptoms or develop a spreading circular red rash. Remember to tell them you were bitten by a tick or have recently spent time outdoors

### Tick removal with tweezers



### Tick in the environment



### Tick attached to skin



### Lyme disease bullseye rash



### Tick found under hair



## Key tick awareness messages

- **'be tick aware'** and remember that you could be exposed to ticks whenever you spend time outdoors, including when in your garden or the local park
- ticks mainly attach to animals, but sometimes they may bite you or your family
- you can reduce the chance of tick bites by walking on clearly defined paths, using insect repellent and performing **regular tick checks**
- some tick bites can result in infection, so it is important to remove ticks safely and as quickly as possible
- the safest way to remove a tick is by using a pair of **fine-tipped** tweezers or a tick removal tool
- if you begin to feel unwell with flu-like symptoms, or develop a spreading circular rash (which usually appears within 1 to 4 weeks after being bitten), **contact your GP or dial NHS 111 promptly**

## More information

For more information, search for the phrases 'ticks' and 'Lyme disease' on these websites: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

You can also send any ticks you find to our Tick Surveillance Scheme. Visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme) to find out more.

NICE Lyme guidance: [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng95](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng95)

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