



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

# Toolbox Talk

# Ticks and Lyme Disease



# Ticks and Lyme Disease

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## Ticks in the countryside are a simple fact of life

Ticks feed on the blood of just about any bird or mammal and some reptiles too. They pick up Lyme disease and other infections from these animals, e.g. mice, voles, squirrels, blackbirds, pheasants and seabirds, which naturally carry the disease. Ticks carry more diseases than any other invertebrate host. If an infected tick subsequently bites you, it may transfer one or more of the diseases into your bloodstream.

Most tick bites are harmless and can be treated with an insect bite cream or antihistamine to reduce irritation.

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Lyme disease is a bacterial infection you might get after being bitten by hard-bodied ticks that are infected by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Most cases of Lyme disease are treated successfully with antibiotics. But, if left untreated, it can infect the heart, joints and nervous system.

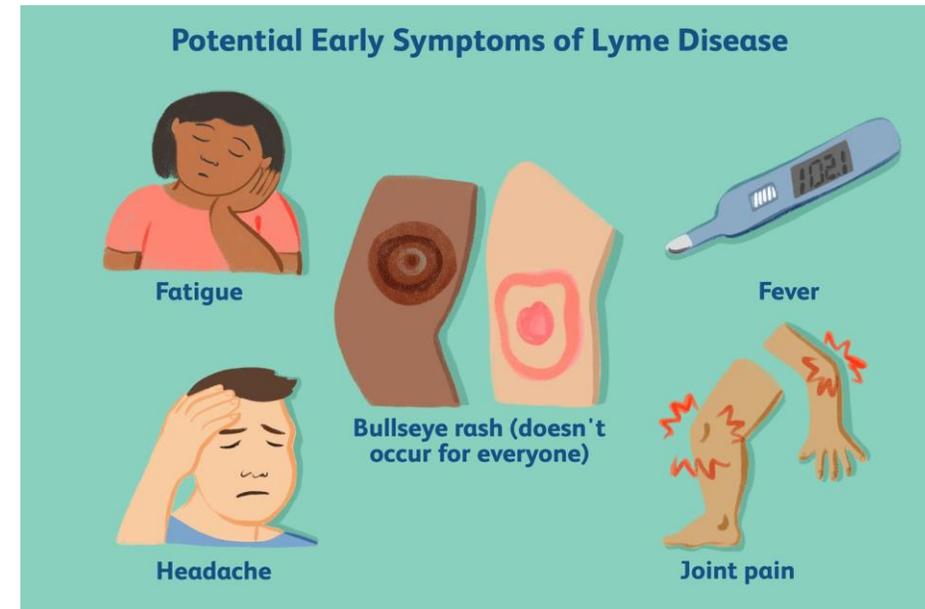
A tick bite usually looks like a lump with a small scab on the skin surface at the site of the bite.



# Ticks and Lyme Disease

Most people with Lyme disease then develop a reddish skin rash in a ring shape, and this may be the only sign of infection. The rash spreads out from the site of a bite after 3 to 30 days. Other common symptoms with early Lyme disease include tiredness, headache, joint pains, and flu-like symptoms.

Early detection and treatment with antibiotics helps to relieve the symptoms and shorten the illness. For this reason, it is important to be aware of the indicators, so that treatment can be given early.



# Ticks and Lyme Disease

Ticks can survive in many places but prefer slightly moist, shady areas such as grass, bracken, bushes and leaf litter. This is also where the animals they feed on are most likely to visit. Ticks can be found in both rural and urban locations. They are least likely to live in short grass or dry heather.

**Risk assessment** – when working out on the network a simple risk assessment will identify whether you are at risk from ticks. If you are going to work or conduct inspections in long vegetation, do not wear shorts, cover your arms and look out for ticks on your clothes. Choose your route to avoid damp shady areas if possible.

Deer ticks may be found in habitats with:

-  Leafy trees
-  Brush and shrubs
-  Leaf litter layer

American Dog ticks may be found in habitats with:

-  Tall grasses
-  Shrubs
-  Open areas



# Ticks and Lyme Disease

## Avoidance tactics

- You should make it more difficult for a tick to reach your skin by wearing shoes rather than sandals and tuck long trousers into socks.
- Ticks can be more easily seen on white or light-coloured clothing.
- Avoid a tick's favourite places by walking in the middle of paths and check yourself after sitting on logs or leaning against tree trunks.
- Use a light coloured blanket for picnic, it is then easier to check for ticks.
- Check your pets for ticks when they come into the house and especially keep them off bedding and soft furnishings. Consider using anti-tick pesticides for pets; consult your veterinary surgeon for advice.
- Consider spraying your clothing with an effective anti-tick pesticide. There are a variety in outdoor shops and chemists. Make sure you follow the instructions carefully.

 **lymedisease.org** LYME DISEASE BASICS  
POWERED BY PATIENTS

**WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?**  
Lyme disease is a bacterial infection primarily transmitted by Ixodes ticks, also known as deer ticks or blacklegged ticks. Lyme disease affects people of all ages. The CDC notes that it is most common in children, older adults, and others such as firefighters and park rangers who work outside and have higher exposure to ticks.

### Be Tick Aware

- **Wear Tick Repellent:** Repellents with DEET, picardin or lemon eucalyptus oil are the most effective.
- **Create a Tick-Safe Zone at Home:** Prune trees, clear leaves and brush, keep deer and other wild animals out of your yard.
- **Treat Pets Monthly:** Animal fur can act like a "tick magnet," exposing you when you snuggle with your pet.

### 10 Outdoor Safety Tips



### Symptoms To Watch For



- Neck Pain
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle Pain
- Sweats
- Chills
- Rash
- Joint Pain
- Fever
- Sleep Issues

Check out your symptoms at [www.lymedisease.org/symptomchecker](http://www.lymedisease.org/symptomchecker) for printable results you can give your doctor.

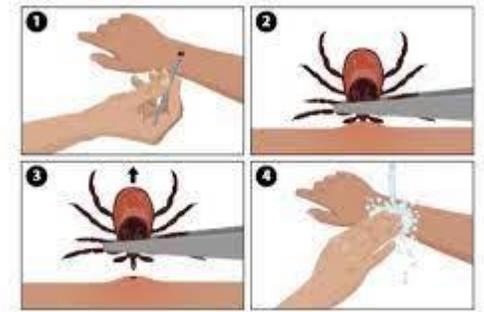


### What If You Get Bitten?

- Don't squeeze, twist or squash the tick. Don't burn it with a match or cover it with Vaseline.
- Use fine-point tweezers or a special tick-removing tool. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
- Pull the tick straight out with steady, even pressure. Disinfect the bite area and wash your hands.
- Save the tick for testing (alive if possible) in a small bottle or plastic bag with a green leaf or damp piece of tissue. Label it with your name, date, site of bite and how long tick was attached.



# How to remove a tick



-  Wear rubber / plastic gloves or, in the absence of gloves, shield fingers with tissue or paper.
-  Using pointed tweezers, (if you do not have a tick remover tool which is available from vets and pet shops). Commence by cleansing the tweezers with antiseptic.
-  With pointed tweezers grasp the tick as close to the host's skin as possible and pull upwards with steady, even pressure. There may be considerable resistance. **Do not** twist or jerk the tick as this may leave the mouth parts embedded.
-  Remove any embedded mouth parts with tweezers or a sterilised needle.
-  **Do not** squeeze or crush the body of the tick, because its fluids (saliva and gut contents) may contain infective organisms.
-  **Do not** handle the tick with bare hands, because infective agents may enter through breaks in the skin or through mucous membranes (if you touch eyes, nostrils or mouth).
-  After tick removal, cleanse the bite site and the tweezers with antiseptic and wash your hands thoroughly.
-  **Do not** use your fingernails to remove a tick. Infection can enter via any breaks in your skin, e.g. Close to the fingernail.



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