

# HOW TO AVOID TICK BITES

## **1. Use an effective repellent**

Apply to exposed skin—never under clothing. Use just enough to cover since heavy doses don't work better. Don't let young children apply their own repellent. Instead, put it on your own hands, then rub it on kids, avoiding their hands, eyes, and mouth. Wash off repellents before you go to bed.

## **2. Wear the right clothes**

When walking through wooded or grassy areas, wear white or light-colored clothes because that makes it easier to spot ticks. Wear long sleeves if possible and long pants, socks, and boots or closed-toe shoes. Tuck your hair into a hat, your shirt into your pants, and your pants into your socks. For extra protection, toss your clothes into a dryer on high heat to kill ticks that might be attached.

## **3. Inspect your skin**

When you are back inside, shower using a wash cloth as soon as possible (preferably within two hours) to remove any unattached ticks, which often remain on your skin for hours before attaching themselves. Search your skin carefully, since deer ticks are no bigger than the head of a pin.

**If you find an attached tick:** Use tweezers to gently remove it from the skin. Grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Remove the whole body, including the head. Once the tick is removed wash the area with soap and water then clean the area again with alcohol.

## **4. Keep your grass short**

Ticks like tall grass and lots of shade. Keep your lawn short, remove leaves and other debris, and try to let as much sun into your yard as possible. Consider putting up a fence around your property to keep out deer and other large animals that can carry ticks.

## **5. Check your pets**

Deer ticks that crawl aboard your dog or cat can attach to you after you touch your pet. So inspect pets after they've been outside, and remove any ticks you find with tweezers. Dispose of a tick by submersing it in rubbing alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet.

**The good news is that if you lose a tick while removing it with tweezers, it likely will be too damaged to bite again.**

See a doctor if you develop signs or symptoms of a tick-borne illness or infection at the site of the bite. In addition to the classic bull's-eye rash of Lyme disease, tick-borne illnesses can cause chills, fever, fatigue, headaches, and muscle or joint pain. Let your doctor know if you find a tick embedded in your skin and watch for signs of illness.

### **Prompt treatment can prevent long term illness.**

#### The New Tick Borne Illness- Powassan Virus

Lyme disease isn't the only tick-borne illness that can come from a walk in the woods. Another pathogen, Powassan virus, can cause dangerous inflammation in the brain and may be transmitted to humans much faster than Lyme. While it is rare, the last reported case in NJ was in 2015, a recent study of ticks, along with a few widely reported cases of human infection, suggest that it may be becoming more common.

The Powassan virus can cause illness including encephalitis, or swelling of the brain. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in lab studies, Powassan virus could be passed from tick to host after only about 15 minutes of attachment. For Lyme disease, it takes 24 hours.

Ticks can carry many diseases, not just Lyme disease. For more information about Lyme and other tick-borne infections, go to [www.lymedisease.org](http://www.lymedisease.org).