

How To Avoid Ticks This Season



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Ticks can be dangerous, in some cases even deadly. Be aware that you are working in conditions where ticks are commonly found – grass, shrubs, weeds, leaf piles and mulch. Likely, you do not even know they are there. Many ticks are tiny and easy to overlook. They can range in size from as small as a pin's head to as large as the nail on your little finger. Often you do not even know they are on you.

If you're an owner and your team is working in areas where ticks are known to be a problem, consider a tailgate training session to educate (or remind) your team of ticks and the dangers they pose. Ultimately, however, it's up to anybody working outdoors to protect themselves against ticks and the diseases they can transmit.

Ticks, which are technically arachnids, attach themselves to your body, bite you and begin growing as they draw blood. In the process some of them can infect you with a bacteria or virus that can make you ill. Not all ticks carry a disease, but even these ticks can cause a problem, especially if you're allergic to them causing you to experience pain or swelling at the bite site, a rash, a blister or difficulty breathing, if severe.

Lyme disease a widespread problem

Ticks, and the diseases that they can transmit to you, are found in many regions of the United States. In the Northeast and Midwest, black-legged ticks (aka, deer ticks), can transmit the bacteria known as spirochetes, causing Lyme disease, the most widespread tick-borne disease in the U.S. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) says it receives reports of about 30,000 cases of Lyme disease annually. Most cases go unreported, the CDC says, because the symptoms are mild or resemble other diseases, and thus the center estimates there may be 300,000 cases a year in this country.

Lyme disease often mimics flu-like symptoms with fever, headache and fatigue.

Diagnosis in its early stages of the disease is difficult. There is no test to identify Lyme within the first month after a tick bite. Once diagnosed, treatment usually involves antibiotics. If left untreated, Lyme disease can result in joint pain, persistent fatigue and, in some cases, neurological damage.

While Lyme disease is the most recognized disease transmitted by ticks, researchers are learning about other (and more dangerous) diseases being transmitted by black-legged ticks. The most fearsome is Powassan disease, which can be deadly. To this point only a small percentage of ticks are infected with the Powassan virus, [reports The New York Times](#).

As previously mentioned, many regions of the U.S. harbor ticks that can transmit a disease to you – Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Colorado tick fever, tularemia and ehrlichiosis. Anybody working outdoors in or around vegetation – especially weedy areas and woodlots – can attract a tick.

How to avoid ticks

The best way to avoid a tick-borne disease, of course, is to prevent ticks from attaching themselves to you.

To do this: **1.)** Wear long sleeves and long pants when working in areas where ticks can be found; **2.)** Use tick repellent with DEET; **3.)** Take a shower or bath within several hours of being outdoors.

If you find a tick on your body, grasp the tick as close as you can to your skin's surface and pull straight up and away from the skin. If possible, you don't want to leave any of the pest's head or mouthparts in the bite. If you work in a region where ticks are common, you may even want to keep a set of tweezers available to make removal easier. The sooner you can remove a tick from your body, the better.