

Be tick aware!

General information about
ticks and tick bite prevention



UK Health
Security
Agency



Rother
District Council

What are ticks?

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. Depending on its development stage, the size of a tick varies.

The species most commonly found on people is the *Ixodes ricinus*, more commonly known as the sheep or deer tick.



Nymphs are about the size of a poppy seed, while adult ticks look more like tiny spiders.

Where do you find ticks?

Ticks can be found where there are deer, small mammals or wild birds. They tend to prefer damp, shady dense vegetation, leaf litter and long grass but can also be found in woodland, open country, public parks or gardens.

How do you come into contact with ticks?

Ticks don't jump or fly, but live on vegetation and climb onto animals or people as they brush past. They then bite to attach to the skin and start to feed on the blood.

It may take the tick up to several days to complete its blood meal, before dropping off. Ticks can be found throughout the year, but are most active between spring and autumn.

Main health risks

Ticks can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme Disease, which can lead to very serious conditions if left untreated. Symptoms of Lyme Disease can include a circular rash, fatigue, and muscle and joint pain.

More serious conditions such as viral-like meningitis, facial palsy, nerve damage and arthritis can develop without treatment, so prevention and early detection are crucial. Lyme Disease can be treated with a course of antibiotics.

Perform a tick check!

Make it a habit to check your clothes and your body regularly for ticks when you're outdoors and again when you get home.

Because it doesn't hurt, you may not notice you've been bitten, so make sure you check yourself, your children and your pets thoroughly.



Ticks prefer warm, moist places on your body, especially the groin area, waist, armpits, behind the knee and along hair lines, so look out for anything as tiny as a freckle or a speck of dirt.

Young children are more commonly bitten around the head, so be extra careful to check around the neck, behind the ears, and on the scalp.

Take simple steps to avoid coming into contact with ticks

- walk on clearly defined paths
- avoid dense vegetation
- wear light-coloured clothing so ticks are easier to spot and brush off
- use repellents such as DEET.

If you have been bitten

Be tick aware by knowing what ticks look like, where they can be found, and by practising prevention that will help you to avoid tick bites. However, if you do get bitten, removing the tick quickly and correctly can help to reduce any potential risk.

- Remove the tick as soon as possible. Removing ticks within 12-24 hours will greatly reduce the risk of Lyme disease transmission

- 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 localised infection, if possible, remove the remaining mouthparts with sterilised tweezers or a needle.

If it is not possible to remove the mouthparts, do not worry, as the skin's natural sloughing process will expel any foreign objects over time.

To prevent a localised infection, once removed, apply antiseptic to the bite area or wash with soap and water and keep an eye on it for several weeks for any changes.

Contact your GP or dial NHS 111 if you begin to feel unwell and remember to tell them you were bitten by a tick.

Find out more

For more information, search for the phrases 'ticks' and 'Lyme disease' on these websites:

www.nhs.uk www.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/government/collections/lyme-disease-guidance-data-and-analysis

www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/

www.nhs.uk/conditions/tick-borne-encephalitis/

You can also send any ticks you find to our Tick Surveillance Scheme.

Visit www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme to find out more.

NICE Lyme guidance: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng95

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