



Tick Bite Prevention & Awareness: *Outdoor Activities & Field Trips*

A resource tool provided by www.palyme.org

The PA Lyme Resource Network DARE 2B TICK AWARE Prevention Program would like to remind you of some general safety practices regarding the prevention of tick bites when enjoying time outdoors.

Pennsylvania is #1 in the United States in cases of Lyme disease and has a big tick problem. Anytime you or your family are outdoors, whether playing in the yard, playing sports, fetching balls from the field, or participating in an outdoor field trip, they may be exposed to ticks. This doesn't mean we should stop spending time outdoors. It just means it makes sense to take reasonable prevention steps.

Following are some measures we recommend for all family members.

BEFORE YOU GO OUTDOORS INTO POTENTIAL TICK HABITATS:

- ✓ **Spray clothing:** spray sneakers and socks with permethrin. Do not spray while wearing them and only do outdoors in the garage with good ventilation. Allow time for them to dry fully before handling or wearing. Permethrin may be purchased online, at Sporting Goods stores, or places like Target or Walmart. Studies have shown permethrin offers 74x the protection from ticks attaching and crawling up your leg than when only shoes and socks are sprayed. Pre-treated socks and clothing may be purchased (Insect Shield, Ex Officio, etc.)
- ✓ **Spray or wipe repellent on exposed skin:** choose appropriate sprays/wipes to spray skin/rub around neck and hair (see free resources at <https://palyme.org/dare-2b-tick-aware/>). Chemical sprays last longer; natural sprays not as long. Consider the length of time you'll be outdoors and select a product that will give you maximum protection for the full time you plan on being outside. Check repellent labels for duration times to ensure they are fully protected.
- ✓ **Awareness:** do not sit directly on the grass, stone walls or fallen logs, stay away from grassy areas, the edge of the woods or bushy areas. In the woods, walk in the middle of trails where grass and weeds will not brush you.

AFTER YOU COME BACK INDOORS:

- ✓ **Clothes dryer:** when you arrive home, put clothes immediately in the dryer for at least 10 minutes at high heat. The washer will not kill ticks, regardless of the water temperature. Only very hot, dry heat will kill ticks.
- ✓ **Tick check:** next do a thorough tick check of the full body. A parent should do this for their young child (to start awareness early, encourage younger children to frequently touch all their freckles to ensure they're not a tick). Teens will want to check themselves; they may use mirrors to view difficult-to-see parts of the body. You or your teen should use their fingers to feel for ticks around the hairline and scalp. Check all areas that are typically moist or dark – especially under watch bands, waist bands, under arms, behind ears, behind the knee, buttocks, etc. Nymph (baby) ticks are very small unless they become engorged (filled with blood). They are the size of a poppy seed and may look like a tiny light brown freckle. Adult ticks are slightly larger.
- ✓ **Shower:** have your child shower immediately rubbing the entire body with a wash cloth to wash off stray ticks that may be there, or in the hair, but not yet attached. Check for ticks again after they shower and repeat over the next day or two.
- ✓ **Eliminate ticks correctly:** remove any tick immediately. Do not apply anything to them – no hot match, no Vaseline, no hydrogen peroxide, no rubbing alcohol, no soap, no essential oils, etc. and do not squeeze the tick. This will only stress the tick and increase the risk of infection. See the directions to the right for the proper removal of a tick. Save the tick in a plastic bag with a moist cotton ball and consider sending it for testing if symptoms occur (labs include TickCheck.com, Igenex.com or TickReport.com). However, the Pennsylvania Department of Health advises that a negative tick test does not rule out disease nor does a positive test indicate you've been infected.
- ✓ **Monitor:** not all ticks are found. As an extra precaution, do additional tick checks for a few days and pay attention for any new signs or symptoms, especially a flu-like illness. Symptoms may occur in the following days, weeks even months after a bite. Always contact your health care practitioner in such cases and let them know of possible tick exposure.

Stay safe and healthy by taking a little extra time to follow these precautions.

For more information or to download our free series of DARE 2B Tick Aware primary prevention materials, please visit <https://palyme.org/dare-2b-tick-aware/>

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Step 1: Use pointed tweezers, or other effective tick removers, to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible.

Step 2: Slowly and steadily pull straight up. Do not twist or jerk the tick.



Step 3: Disinfect bite area.