

Tick Bites

What is it?

A bite from a tick.

Most tick bites are painless and cause only minor signs and symptoms, such as a change in skin color, swelling or a sore on the skin.

But some ticks transmit bacteria that cause illnesses, including Lyme disease, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

In general, to transmit Lyme disease a tick needs to be attached to a person's skin for at least 36 hours. Other infections can be transferred in a few hours or even a few minutes.

Plan of Action:

- **Remove the tick promptly and carefully.** Use fine-tipped forceps or tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Gently pull out the tick using a slow and steady upward motion. Avoid twisting or squeezing the tick. Do not handle the tick with bare hands. Do not use petroleum jelly, fingernail polish or a hot match to remove a tick.
- **Secure the tick and take a picture.** A picture of the tick can help you and your health care provider identify what type it is and whether you are at risk of a transmitted disease. You can trap the tick in a piece of tape for disposal in the garbage. Your provider may want to see the tick or a photo if you develop new symptoms.
- **Wash your hands and the bite site.** Use warm water and soap, rubbing alcohol, or an iodine scrub.

When to Seek Emergency Care:

- A severe headache

- Difficulty breathing
- Paralysis
- Heart palpitations

When to Contact Your Doctor:

- **You aren't able to completely remove the tick.** The longer the tick remains attached to the skin, the greater the risk of getting a disease from it. Your skin may also get irritated.
- **The rash gets bigger.** A small bump may appear at the site of the tick bite. This is typical. If it develops into a larger rash or you develop a rash anywhere, possibly with a bull's-eye pattern, it may indicate Lyme disease. The rash usually appears within 3 to 14 days.

Consult your provider even if the rash disappears because you may still be at risk of having the disease. Your risk of contracting a disease from a tick bite depends on where you live or travel to, how much time you spend outside in woody and grassy areas, and how well you protect yourself.

- **You develop flu-like signs and symptoms.** Fever, chills, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, and a headache may accompany the rash.
- **You think the bite site is infected.** Signs and symptoms include pain, change in skin color or oozing from the site.
- **You think you were bitten by a deer tick.** You may need antibiotics.

If possible, bring the tick, or a photo of the tick, with you to your doctor's appointment.