

**Health and Safety
ALERT**
INFORMATION ON TICKS AND LYME DISEASE
(Post on OHS Bulletin Boards for at least 60 days)

We work, live and play in a known prevalent area of Nova Scotia where Lyme disease bacteria is present in ticks. It is important to take precautions whenever working or playing outdoors.

What do ticks look like?

There are many different kinds of ticks, but the only two that bite humans are dog ticks and blacklegged ticks. It may be difficult to tell the difference. Blacklegged ticks (or deer ticks) carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Blacklegged ticks are very small (smaller than a dog tick), and their looks change during their life cycle. The larvae and nymphs (baby and teenager stages) are around the size of a poppy or sesame seed. They can be mistaken for a freckle, skin tag, or a speck of dirt. Even at this small size, they can transmit Lyme disease. In the adult stage, they are larger (up to the size of a small grape when engorged), reddish orange and darker. Their bite is painless.



Unfed, partially fed, and fully engorged nymphs of the blacklegged tick. Note the change in size and color.

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that can be serious if not treated. The first symptom is usually a rash near the tick bite. It may - but not always - look like a bulls-eye target and can appear between 3-30 days after the bite, but usually between 7-10 days. Other symptoms may be flu-like: fever, headaches, tiredness, stiff neck, pain and swelling in joints, body aches and pain. Symptoms may appear in stages and over a period of months. Contact your health care provider if symptoms appear after a tick bite. Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics and early detection and treatment almost always results in full recovery. Lyme disease is rarely life-threatening, but untreated, serious symptoms or illness may develop.

How can I avoid tick contact?

- ❖ Keep common grass areas cut to minimize suitable habitat for ticks.
- ❖ Wear light-colored, long sleeve shirts, pants and socks so ticks are more visible.
- ❖ Pull socks up over pant legs and tuck in shirts.
- ❖ Wear enclosed shoes when working or playing in bushes, tall grass, wooded areas.
- ❖ Spray clothing and exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin (follow product directions and precautions carefully).
- ❖ Walk along well-travelled trails, stick to the centre of the trail, and avoid contact with longer grass and vegetation along a trail edge.
- ❖ Do a thorough check of clothing and exposed skin for ticks after working or playing in bushes, tall grass, wooded areas. Pay special attention to small children and pets. Feel for bumps and look for brown spots on the skin, especially around armpits, back of knees, groin, pelvic and groin areas.
- ❖ When possible, take a bath or shower shortly after coming indoors. This can help locate ticks on the body quickly.
- ❖ Remove any ticks as soon as possible – blacklegged ticks can only transmit the bacterial infection after they have been attached to the skin for at least 24 hours.
 - Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers, get as close to the skin as you can.
 - Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk twist or squeeze it.
 - Wash the site with soap and water. Disinfect with rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.
 - Record the date and time of the tick bite, be aware and watch for symptoms

(Content source: Nova Scotia Health Authority; Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Communication and Disease Prevention and Control)