



Tick Smarts

9 Ways to Protect Yourself From Lyme Disease



EXPERIENCE LIFE





Spending

time outdoors exposes people to any number of pests, from blood-sucking mosquitoes to stinging bees. But it's ticks, the tiny insects found primarily in wooded areas, that are increasingly a cause for concern.

Ticks spread a number of diseases, including Lyme disease, a potentially debilitating condition that can lead to severe fatigue, joint pain, neurological disorders, and other health problems.

With more than 300,000 CDC-acknowledged cases a year in the United States (the tip of the iceberg, many believe), Lyme has become one of the country's fastest-spreading diseases.

Still, experts say, there are many ways to offset the risks of tick exposure. In other words, if you take a few precautions, you can still embrace the outdoors.

Here are nine tips for enjoying nature — while staying safe — this summer.



1 Dress Appropriately



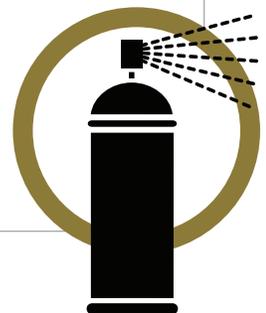
Ticks can't jump or fly, but they can climb up from ground level or scale grasses to grab onto you as you walk past. Dress to protect yourself: Always wear boots or shoes, not sandals. Wear a long-sleeved shirt and pants — and tuck those pants into high socks. Also, wear a hat and, if necessary, tie back long hair. Another tip? Wear light-colored clothing so ticks stand out.



2 Repel Ticks

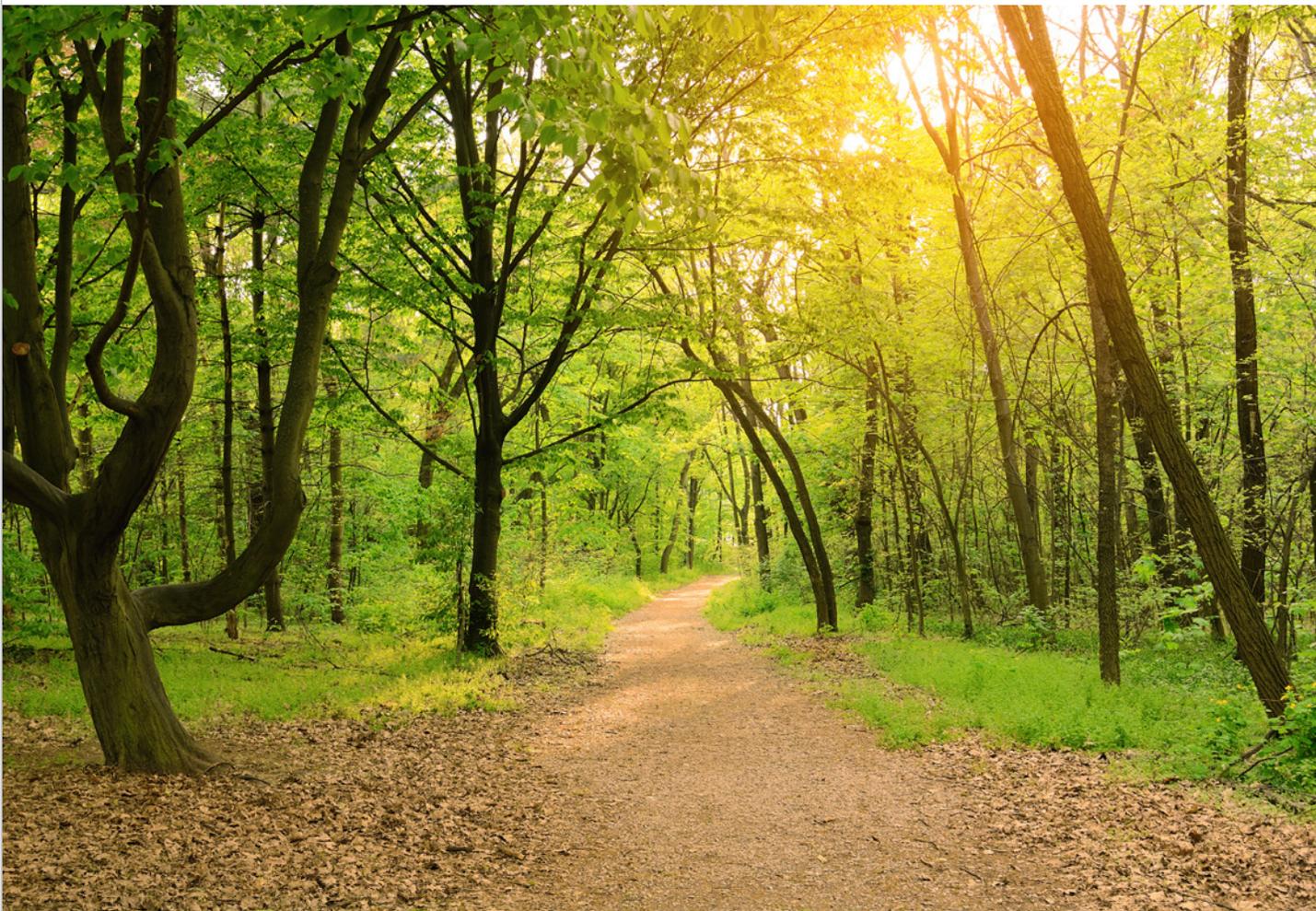


The CDC recommends using insect repellents, but choose wisely. DEET is the most common repellent, but possible side effects may include allergic skin reactions, eye irritation, and, in high doses, neurological problems such as seizures. For tick-infested areas, some experts recommend using Permethrin-treated clothes, but the Environmental Working Group (EWG) advises caution, as the chemical is toxic. Use your own best judgment in weighing exposure to these toxins against the risk of a tick bite. For more on the safety of bug repellents, see [EWG's guide](#).



3 Walk

in the Middle of Trails



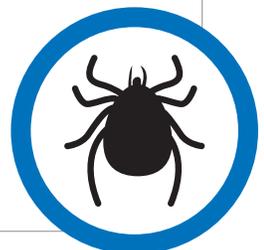
Stay on paths, and avoid sitting on logs or leaning on trees. Also, ticks dry out easily so they prefer shady, moist, wooded areas to sunny, dry, clear areas. If you're picnicking, look for open ground.



4 Do a Tick Check



Immediately after coming indoors, do a full-body check. Be thorough: Adolescent ticks are the size of poppy seeds and may look like freckles. Ticks are attracted to warm, hidden places, so pay special attention to your armpits, groin area, back of knees, and scalp. Repeat the tick check daily for several days.



5 Take a Shower



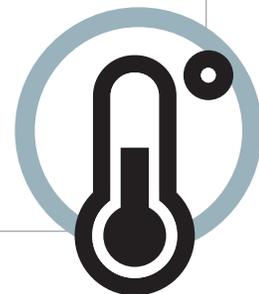
After doing a tick check, take a shower right away to wash away any unattached ticks you might have missed.



6 Throw Your Clothes in the Dryer



If you think you may have encountered ticks, the CDC recommends tossing your clothes into a dryer set on high heat for an hour. Washing your clothes won't kill ticks, but drying them with intense heat will.



7 Inspect Your Pets



Ticks can hitchhike home on your dog or cat, then attach to you later, so do a tick check on your pets as well. And talk to your vet about tick protection for your animals.



8 Make Your Yard Tick-Safe



Reduce your own yard's tick habitat by keeping leaves, tall grass, and shrubs out of areas you use regularly. The CDC offers more advice on [how to create tick-proof landscaping.](#)



9 If You Find a Tick . . .

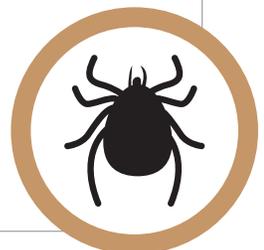


If you discover a tick on you, there's no risk if it's still crawling around. If it's been attached for less than 24 hours, the chance of contracting Lyme disease is small.

If you do find an attached tick, remove it carefully with tweezers placed as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick upward with steady, even pressure, making sure the mouth parts are cleanly removed. Apply antiseptic.

Save the tick in a sealed container with a moist cotton ball. Call your state health department to inquire about testing. And, consult a doctor about being treated for the tick bite with oral antibiotics. Recent findings from CDC research suggest that the single dose of treatment generally recommended may be inadequate.

Watch for signs of illness in the days and weeks after the bite. Some estimates indicate that fewer than 60 percent of Lyme patients ever exhibit the classic "bull's-eye" rash. Other symptoms include headache, memory loss, fatigue, and swollen knees. See a Lyme-literate healthcare provider if these develop.



For more on preventing and treating Lyme disease, check out these resources:



**Infectious Diseases
Society of America:**
www.idsociety.org



Lyme Disease Association:
www.lymediseaseassociation.org



**International Lyme and
Associated Diseases Society:**
www.ilads.org



Beating Lyme Disease
(Experience Life)



What We Don't Know About Lyme
(Experience Life)