

What are ticks and where can you find them?



Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people.

The size of a tick varies, depending on the stage of its life cycle, gender, species and whether it has fed recently. Nymphs are about the size of a poppy seed, while adult ticks look more like tiny spiders.

Ticks can survive in many places, but prefer moist areas with dense vegetation or long grass.

How do you come into contact with ticks?

Ticks don't jump or fly, but wait until an animal or person brushes past to climb on. They then bite to attach to the skin and start to feed on blood. It may take several days to complete their blood meal, before they drop 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 flu-like symptoms, fatigue, muscle and joint pain.

A characteristic expanding rash, called erythema migrans with a bull's eye appearance, is present in most but not all cases. You may not always remember being bitten by a tick, so if you have spent time outdoors and develop any of these symptoms; seek advice from your GP.

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

How to avoid tick bites

 - Take simple steps to avoid coming into contact with ticks, such as:

- Walking on clearly defined paths, to avoid brushing against vegetation where possible
- Avoiding dense vegetation where practical
- Wearing clothes and footwear which covers all bare skin
- Constricting trouser legs around the ankles and footwear with gaiters or cycle clips
- Shaking and brushing outdoor clothing before going into a vehicle or indoors
- Regularly check exposed skin for ticks while outside and brush them off before they bite
- Always check all of your body for ticks, especially armpits, groin, navel, neck and head as soon as possible after working in tick infested areas. Preferably have a shower soon after a day working or walking outside. It is often possible to wash away ticks before they have bitten



What to do if bitten by a tick



It is important to carefully remove ticks completely from your skin without causing the tick to release additional saliva or its stomach contents into your bite wound

- Remove the tick as soon as possible
- Preferably use a proprietary tick removal tool (illustrated) or alternatively, use pointed tweezers
- Cleanse tick removal tool with antiseptic or antiseptic wipe before use if possible
- **Place the tick removal tool as close to the skin as possible – the tick should be removed in one piece**
- **Without squeezing the tick's body, steadily pull the tick, without twisting; there may be considerable resistance before it releases the skin**
- After tick removal, cleanse the bite site and tools with an antiseptic wipe
- Check the bite site for signs of a developing rash which may be quite distinctive
- The rash could develop between 2 and 30 days
- If a rash develops around the tick bite or you feel unwell with flu-like symptoms like muscle or joint pain, headaches or an upset stomach, consult your doctor
- A rash which spreads out from the bite could be a sign of Lyme disease
- The disease responds well to treatment with antibiotics but it is better that it is treated early
- There is no need to see your doctor if you have been bitten but have no other symptoms
- If you do visit your doctor, then remember to tell them that you have been bitten by a tick.