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Tick Bites

What are ticks?

Ticks are small parasites. They may look like insects, but they have eight legs and are related to spiders. Ticks feed on the blood of people and warm-blooded animals. There are many types of ticks in the United States, and they live in different parts of the country.

Ticks can be different colors and sizes. They can be light-colored, reddish brown, or dark brown. Some ticks are so small that they can be difficult to see. Ticks may get on you if you walk through areas where they live, such as tall grass, leaf litter or shrubs.

Why do I need to be worried about tick bites?

If you spend time outdoors or have pets that go outdoors, you need to beware of ticks. When they bite, certain types of ticks can pass on germs that cause different diseases. Sometimes the symptoms can be mild. In other cases, you can have serious, long-lasting health problems. Some of the diseases you can get from a tick bite (called tickborne diseases) include:

- Lyme disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/lymedisease.html>]
- Alpha-gal syndrome (tick bite red meat allergy)
- Babesiosis
- Ehrlichiosis
- Rocky Mountain spotted fever
- Tularemia

What happens if I get bitten by a tick?

You may not feel it when a tick bites you. The tick can stay attached to your body for several days. If that tick is infected, it can pass along any germs to you once it starts sucking your blood. But if you catch it and remove it before it has filled up on your blood, you are less likely to get infected.

How do I remove a tick?

If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove the tick as soon as you can. You could use a tick removal device or a fine-tipped tweezers:

- Using the tweezers, grab the tick as close to your skin as possible.
- Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick. You want to remove the whole tick in one piece if you can. If the mouth-parts of the tick break off and stay in the skin, try to remove them. But if you can't remove them easily, then leave them.
- Thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

When do I need to contact my health care provider about a tick bite?

Many tickborne diseases can have similar signs and symptoms. The most common are:

- Fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>]

- Chills
- Aches and pains
- Rash [<https://medlineplus.gov/rashes.html>]

If you develop any of these symptoms within several weeks of removing a tick, contact your provider.

How can I prevent tick bites?

There are steps you can take to prevent tick bites:

- Avoid wooded, brushy, and grassy areas, especially during warmer months.
- Wear insect repellent with DEET, picaridin or another U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellent.
- Wear light-colored protective clothing.
- Treat your clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin.
- Tuck your pant legs into your socks and your shirt into your pants.
- Remove your clothing after being outdoors. Check your clothing for ticks and remove any ticks that you find. Wash and dry your clothes at high temperatures.
- Check yourself, your children, and your pets daily for ticks and carefully remove any ticks you find.

Start Here

- About Ticks and Tickborne Disease [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- An Uptick in Ticks: Don't Let Ticks Make You Sick [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/06/uptick-ticks>]
 (National Institutes of Health)
 Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/un-repuente-en-las-garrapatas>]
- Tickborne Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/tickborne-diseases>]
 (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases)
- Ticks and Lyme Disease: Symptoms, Treatment, and Prevention [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/ticks-and-lyme-disease-symptoms-treatment-and-prevention>] (Food and Drug Administration)
 Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/articulos-para-el-consumidor-en-espanol/las-garrapatas-y-la-enfermedad-de-lyme-sintomas-tratamiento-y-prevencion>]

Symptoms

- Red Meat Allergy [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/red-meat-allergy.html>] (Nemours Foundation) - In English and Spanish
 Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/red-meat-allergy.html>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Find the Repellent that is Right for You [<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>]
 (Environmental Protection Agency)
 Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.epa.gov/control-de-plagas/encuentre-el-repelente-de-insectos-adecuado>]
- Preventing Tick Bites [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/es/prevention/como-prevenir-las-picaduras-de-garrapatas.html>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Tick Bites, First Aid [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/first-aid-tick-bites/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- What to Do after a Tick Bite [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/after-a-tick-bite/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/es/after-a-tick-bite/que-hacer-despues-de-la-picadura-de-una-garrapata.html>]

Related Issues

- It's Open Season on Ticks [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/media/pdfs/Its-Open-Season-on-Ticks.pdf>]
 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - PDF

- Preventing Ticks on Pets [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention/preventing-ticks-on-pets.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/es/prevention/como-prevenir-las-garrapatas-en-las-mascotas.html>]
 - Tickborne Diseases in Workers [<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/outdoor-workers/about/tick-borne-diseases.html>] (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)
 - Where Ticks Live [<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/about/where-ticks-live.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- ## Specifics
- About Alpha-gal Syndrome [<https://www.cdc.gov/alpha-gal-syndrome/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Anaplasmosis [<https://www.cdc.gov/anaplasmosis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Babesiosis [<https://www.cdc.gov/babesiosis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Heartland Virus [<https://www.cdc.gov/heartland-virus/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Powassan [<https://www.cdc.gov/powassan/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Q Fever [<https://www.cdc.gov/q-fever/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever [<https://www.cdc.gov/rocky-mountain-spotted-fever/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI) [<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/about/about-southern-tick-associated-rash-illness.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - About Tick-Borne Encephalitis [<https://www.cdc.gov/tick-borne-encephalitis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - Ehrlichiosis and Anaplasmosis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ehrlichiosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20372142?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
 - Tick Paralysis [<https://aldf.com/tick-paralysis/>] (American Lyme Disease Foundation)
 - Tick-Borne Relapsing Fever [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/tick-borne-relapsing-fever/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/fiebre-recurrente-transmitida-por-las-garrapatas-es/?adfree=true>]

Statistics and Research

- Anaplasmosis: Epidemiology and Statistics [<https://www.cdc.gov/anaplasmosis/hcp/statistics/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Data and Statistics on Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis [<https://www.cdc.gov/rocky-mountain-spotted-fever/data-research/facts-stats/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Ehrlichiosis Epidemiology and Statistics [<https://www.cdc.gov/ehrlichiosis/data-research/facts-stats/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Q Fever: Epidemiology and Statistics [<https://www.cdc.gov/q-fever/data-research/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Tick Bites [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Tick+Bites%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Tick-Borne Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Tick-Borne+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Modeling the effects of lethal and non-lethal predation on the dynamics... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40676980>]

- Article: Dermacentor ticks and their human pathogens in various ecosystems of eastern... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40664101]
- Article: Cattle tick-borne diseases: study of knowledge and practices among communal farmers... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40663203]
- Tick Bites -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Tick+Bites%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+OR+%22Tick-Borne+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+]

Find an Expert

- American Lyme Disease Foundation [https://aldf.com/]
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [https://www.cdc.gov/] Also in Spanish [https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [https://www.niaid.nih.gov/] 

Children

- Hey! A Tick Bit Me! [https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/tick.html] (Nemours Foundation) Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/tick.html]
- Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (For Parents) [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/rocky.html] (Nemours Foundation) Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/rocky.html]
- Tick Removal: A Step-by-Step Guide (For Parents) [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tick-removal.html] (Nemours Foundation) Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/tick-removal.html]
- What to Do About Tick Bites (For Parents) [https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tick-bites-sheet.html] (Nemours Foundation) Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/tick-bites-sheet.html]

Patient Handouts

- Colorado tick fever [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000675.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000675.htm]
- Ehrlichiosis [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001381.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001381.htm]
- Rocky Mountain spotted fever [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000654.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000654.htm]
- Tick bite [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002856.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002856.htm]
- Tick paralysis [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001359.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001359.htm]
- Tick removal [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007211.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007211.htm]
- Tularemia [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000856.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000856.htm]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Colorado tick fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000675.htm>]

Ehrlichiosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001381.htm>]

Relapsing fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001350.htm>]

Rocky Mountain spotted fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000654.htm>]

Tick bite [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002856.htm>]

Tick paralysis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001359.htm>]

Tick removal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007211.htm>]

Tularemia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000856.htm>]

Tularemia blood test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003523.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Insect Bites and Stings [<https://medlineplus.gov/insectbitesandstings.html>]

Lyme Disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/lymedisease.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Tick Bites* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/tickbites.html>] on *Tick Bites*

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[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>].

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