



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Heading outside? Be on the lookout for ticks



Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- It may not exactly feel like it, but according to the calendar, spring is here, which means ticks are here too.

While ticks may be small in size, they are nothing to mess with. They are known to transmit numerous diseases to people and pets, with Lyme disease being the most common.

Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, and a bull's-eye rash at the site of the bite.

Lyme disease can be serious and even fatal if not properly diagnosed and treated, so prevention is important. If possible, it's best to avoid shady, moist areas in woody and grassy locations, as these are the preferred hiding spots for ticks. If you do need to venture into these areas, walk on well groomed trails and avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush and leaf litter.

Other prevention tips include:

- Wear light-colored clothing so ticks are easier to spot.
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt.
- Tuck pants into socks or boots.
- Apply insect/tick repellent containing DEET, following manufacturer's instructions.
- Check clothes and exposed skin frequently for ticks.

Upon returning from potentially tick-infested areas, be sure to search your clothes and then bath or shower as soon as possible to more easily find ticks. They can attach to any part of the body, but are commonly found in the hairline, ears, waistline, groin, armpits and sock line.

Prompt removal of a tick is the best method to decrease the chance of infection. If you find one attached to your skin, follow these instructions: Using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.

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2- Ticks

Slowly and gently pull upward with steady, even pressure. Be sure to pull the tick straight out and don't twist or jerk the tick as this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the area and your hands with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to the bite wound.

If the tick is alive after removal, place it in an airtight container with a blade of grass or moistened piece of paper towel and contact MMDHD for further instructions (989-224-3111 in Clinton County, 989-875-1019 in Gratiot County and 989-831-3615 in Montcalm County). Testing of the tick may or may not be necessary; MMDHD will be able to tell you for sure. It is important to note that dead ticks cannot be tested.

If a rash or fever develops within several weeks of removing a tick, be sure to see your doctor. Patients treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover rapidly and completely.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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