



Tick Bites

What is a tick bite?

A tick is a small brown bug that attaches to the skin and sucks blood for 3 to 6 days. The bite is usually painless and doesn't itch. The wood tick (or dog tick) which transmits Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Colorado tick fever is up to 1/2 inch in size. The deer tick which transmits Lyme disease is the size of a pinhead. After feeding on blood, both of these ticks become swollen and easy to see.

How do I remove the tick?

The simplest and quickest way to remove a tick is to pull it off. Use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible (try to get a grip on his head). Apply a steady upward pull until he releases his grip. Do not twist the tick or jerk it suddenly because it may break off the tick's head or mouth parts. Do not squeeze the tweezers to the point of crushing the tick; the secretions released may contain germs that cause disease. If you don't have tweezers, use fingers, a loop of thread around the jaws, or a needle between the jaws to pull it out.

If the body is removed but the head is left in the skin, use a sterile needle to remove the head (in the same way that you would remove a sliver). Apply antibiotic ointment to the bite once.

Wash the wound and your hands with soap and water after removal. Do not put a hot match on the tick or cover the tick with petroleum jelly, fingernail polish, or rubbing alcohol to try to make the tick back out. In the past, it was thought that petroleum jelly, fingernail polish, or alcohol would block the tick's breathing pores and take its mind off eating. Unfortunately, ticks breathe only a few times per hour.

How can I help prevent tick bites?

- **Repellent:** Insect repellent containing an ingredient called permethrin can be put on clothing to repel ticks and other insects. Permethrin is more effective than DEET against ticks. Examples of these products include, Duranon, Permanone, and Congo Creek Tick Spray. Apply it to clothes (especially pant cuffs), shoes, and socks. You can also put it on other

outdoor items (mosquito screen, sleeping bags). Do not put this kind of repellent on the skin because it quickly loses its effectiveness on skin.

- **Tick check:** Children and adults who are hiking in tick-infested areas should wear long clothing and tuck the end of the pants into the socks. During the hike perform tick checks using a buddy system every 4 hours to remove ticks on the clothing or exposed skin. Immediately after the hike or at least once a day, do a bare skin check. A brisk shower at the end of a hike will remove any tick that isn't firmly attached. Because the bite is painless and doesn't itch, your child will probably not know it is there. Favorite hiding places for ticks are in the hair so carefully check the scalp, neck, armpit, and groin. Removing ticks promptly may prevent infection because transmission of Lyme disease requires at least 24 hours of feeding. Also the tick is easier to remove before it becomes firmly attached.

When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- You can't remove the tick or the tick's head.
- Your child has a fever or widespread rash within the 2 weeks following the bite.

Call during office hours if:

- You think your child might have Lyme disease (your child has a rash that looks like a bull's-eye near the bite).
- You have other questions or concern

NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.