



How to Check Yourself for Ticks and How to Remove an Attached Tick

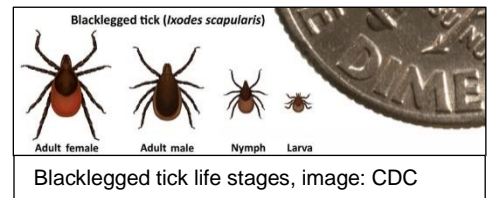
FACT SHEET 18-092-0919

Introduction:

There are 7 common human-biting tick species that transmit at least 13 diseases to humans in the United States. Checking yourself for ticks and promptly removing them significantly reduces your risk of infection with a tick-borne disease. If you are a Department of Defense (DOD) beneficiary, such as a Service member, Family member, Civilian, or retiree, you can submit ticks for identification and pathogen testing to help your doctor make the best choice about your medical care. Ticks can be submitted to the DoD Human Tick Test Kit Program by mail. For more information, visit:

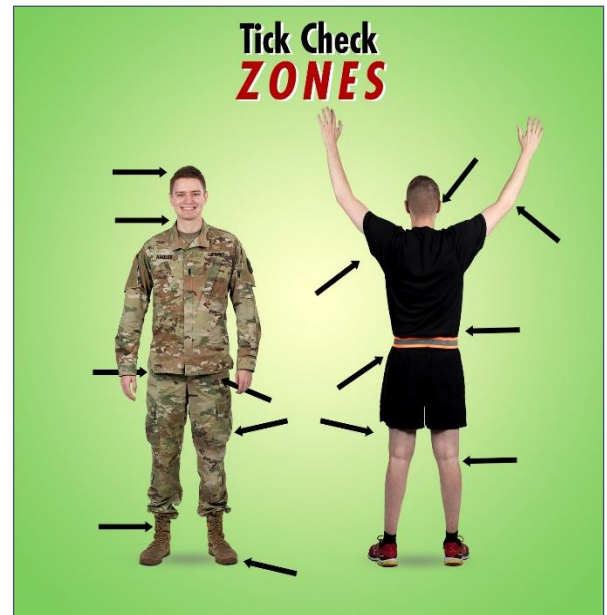
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/envirohealth/epm/Pages/HumanTickTestKitProgram.aspx>

Ticks are small, especially as immatures and can, therefore, easily go undetected. Ticks live near the ground in a variety of habitats such as fallen leaves, tall grass, and bushes. When you brush against ticks, they may climb onto your clothes or body and then crawl to an area of exposed skin where they can bite and feed.



How to Check Yourself and Your Family for Ticks:

While in potential tick habitat, including your backyard, you should routinely examine your clothing and body and remove ticks. After leaving tick habitat, carefully recheck your clothes and entire body. Ticks are frequently found on the head, neck, groin, and underarms but can attach anywhere on the body. Use the buddy system to check areas that you cannot see yourself during a self-examination. You can also take a shower and use a hand-held or full-length mirror to check your whole body for ticks. When checking for ticks, pay special attention to these areas: under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, back of the knees, in and around hair, between the legs, and around the waist. If you find a tick attached to your body, remove it as soon as possible. Save actively biting (attached) ticks for identification and testing by placing them in a sealed plastic bag or container in the freezer. Directions on removing ticks and submitting them to the DoD Human Tick Test Kit Program are on the following page. Avoid crushing ticks because their body fluids may contain pathogens and, therefore, be infectious.



Check for ticks in your hair, along your hairline, behind your ears, on the back of your neck, in your armpits, around your waist band and groin, inside your belly button, around your elbows and the back of your knees, around your boot or shoe laces, and between your toes.

Examine clothing, inside and out, and remove and dispose of all ticks. Ticks can be removed from clothing by hand. Easily remove ticks from clothing using ordinary masking tape, cellophane tape, or other types of tape. Dab the sticky side of tape against clothing to stick ticks to the tape. The tape can then be carefully folded over the ticks to prevent their escape and discarded in the trash. An adhesive lint roller will also efficiently remove large numbers of ticks from clothing, especially very tiny larvae, which can occur in clusters of several hundred. You can also dry your clothing on high heat to kill ticks. Sometimes ticks hitch a ride on your dog or outdoor cat's fur and then attach to you when they have the opportunity. Regularly check yourself and your pets for ticks.

Proper Tick Removal Procedure

Promptly remove ticks found attached to your body following these guidelines:

1. Grasp the tick's mouthparts against the skin using pointed tweezers (Figure 2).
2. Pull back slowly, steadily, and firmly.
 - a. Pull backward in the opposite direction the mouthparts are inserted, like you would for a splinter.
 - b. **BE PATIENT**—The long, central mouthpart (called the hypostome) is covered with sharp barbs (Figure 3), sometimes making removal difficult. The hypostome is the **ONLY** part of a tick that enters the skin; they do not burrow.

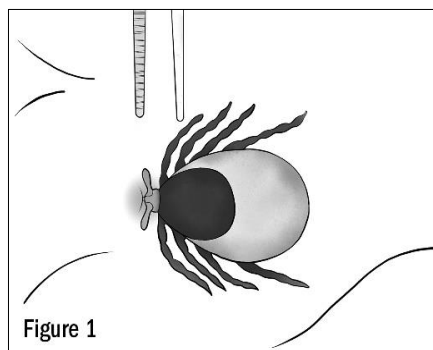


Figure 1

- c. Most ticks secrete a cement-like substance during feeding. This material helps glue their mouthparts firmly in the skin, making removal more difficult.
 - d. Continue to pull steadily until the tick mouthparts can be eased out of the skin.
 - e. **DO NOT** pull back sharply; this may tear the mouthparts from the tick's body, leaving them embedded in the skin. Do not panic if this happens. Embedded mouthparts are comparable to having a splinter in your skin. Mouthparts alone cannot transmit disease because the infective body of the tick is no longer attached; however, to prevent the chance of secondary infection, it is best to remove them. Seek medical assistance if necessary.

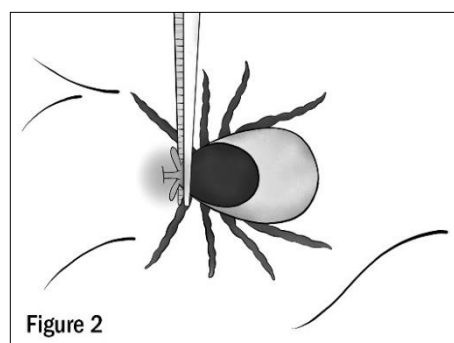


Figure 2

- f. **DO NOT** squeeze or crush the body of the tick because this may force infective body fluids through the mouthparts and into the wound site.
 - g. **DO NOT** apply any substance such as petroleum jelly, finger nail polish remover, repellents, pesticides, or a lighted match to the tick while it is attached. These materials are either ineffective or might agitate the tick and cause it to force more infective fluid into the wound site.

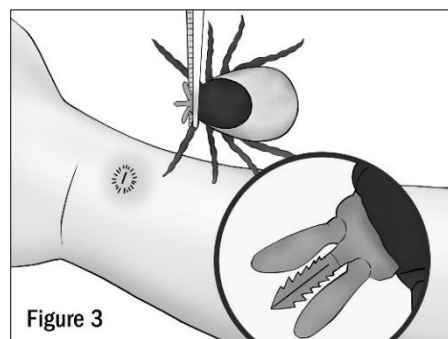


Figure 3

- h. Clean the bite site with soap and water after removal.
 - i. If you are a DOD beneficiary such as a Service member, Family member, Civilian, or retiree, you can submit your tick for identification and pathogen testing to the DoD Human Tick Test Kit Program. For more information, visit the page here:

<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/envirohealth/epm/Pages/HumanTickTestKitProgram.aspx>

Other Resources:

APHC Video—How to Remove Attached Ticks, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bl37ceSZ_s

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Tick-borne Diseases of the United States, <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/tick-bites-prevention.html>