

Health & Safety Tip #94

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is spread by ticks carrying the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. These ticks have been found in many areas of B.C. including Vancouver Island, and live in tall grass and wooded areas.

Ticks that spread Lyme disease are tiny bugs, about the size of a sesame seed. They will attach to people or animals as they pass by, burrow part way into the skin, bite, draw blood and then drop off. Different ticks prefer different types of animals, and sometimes they will bite a person. Less than 1% of ticks carry *Borrelia burgdorferi* - and there is only a small chance of these ticks giving you Lyme disease. However, the disease can be serious, so it is worth taking steps to avoid being bitten.

Ticks are easiest to spot when they are actually sucking blood. The feeding tick's mouth will be under the skin, but the back parts will be sticking out. They will be full of blood and blue-grey in colour (this is called an "engorged" tick).

To protect yourself against tick and insect bites:

- Walk on cleared trails wherever possible when walking in tall grass or woods.
- Wear light coloured clothing, tuck your top into your pants and tuck your pants into your boots or socks.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on all uncovered skin. Reapply as frequently as directed on the container.
- Check clothing and scalp (covered or not) when leaving an area where ticks may live.
- Check in folds of skin. Have someone help you check hard-to-see areas. When a tick is located, remove it immediately. Check the whole body! Don't stop when you find one tick. There may be more. Make sure the lighting is good so that you will not miss seeing the ticks.
- Regularly check household pets for ticks.

Information taken from the BCCDC website. To find out more about Lyme disease and what to do if you find a tick, click [here](#).

