



TICK-BORNE DISEASE PREVENTION



WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

National parks protect wildlands across Canada and are great places to experience and enjoy nature. Wildlife in national parks can pose risks to visitors, even an insect as small as a tick. Reduce your risk by keeping informed and taking precautions.

What are ticks?

- Ticks are tiny parasites, which can vary in size from the size of a sesame seed to the size of an apple seed.
- They live mainly in tall grass and wooded areas, and in areas frequently used by ungulates (sheep, deer).
- They wait for the opportunity to crawl onto animals or people in order to find a place to attach and feed. They feed on the blood of animals and humans. As the female draws blood, its body can expand up to 200 times its original weight.
- Ticks are most active in spring and early summer, but may be found earlier or later depending on the weather.

Why be concerned?

- Ticks can carry and transmit various diseases which can have serious effects on people, but cases are rare.
- To cause disease, the tick must be infected itself and it has to be attached to the skin for 18-24 hours.

Reduce your risk

- Walk on cleared trails whenever possible. Avoid rubbing up against bushes and tall grass.
- Wear light-coloured clothing and a hat (to see ticks more easily). Tuck your shirt into your pants and your pant bottoms into your socks. Wear closed footwear.
- Consider applying DEET-based insect repellent onto clothing and uncovered skin.
- Keep an eye out for ticks on your clothing. They are easily brushed off. Check children frequently.

Perform a tick check

- Immediately following your excursion, or at the end of the day, check your skin and hair. Ticks

tend to climb upwards and travel to areas of warmth such as the scalp, groin and armpits. They are often found around the hairline.

- Check your pets. Tick-borne diseases can affect them too, and their ticks may transfer to you.
- When you remove your clothing, ensure there are no ticks hiding in it.

Tick removal tips

- If you find a tick, remove it immediately. Ticks rarely bite right away, so in most cases they can be easily brushed off or removed.
- If the tick is embedded, you must carefully remove it so that its mouth parts do not stay in your skin. Use tweezers or fingers to get hold of the tick as closely to the skin as possible. Slowly, but steadily, pull the tick's body away from the skin. Do not jerk or twist it. Do not squeeze the tick, as this may cause it to inject more toxins.
- If you don't completely remove the tick, remove remaining parts as you would a splinter.
- After removing the tick, wash your hands and clean the area with soap and water. Apply a disinfectant and a bandage. Check the site over the next few days for redness or a rash.

When to see a doctor

- If you are unable to remove the entire tick or the area becomes infected, see your doctor immediately.
- If you develop a rash in the bite area (particularly a bull's-eye rash, which expands out in a ring around the bite area), or if unusual flu-like medical symptoms develop within 2 weeks, see your doctor immediately.

These diseases can be treated

- Tick-borne diseases can be treated, particularly if caught early. Typically, these diseases are treated with antibiotics.

