

## “Tick Talk”

Several diseases are spread to people by the bite of an infected tick. The most recognized are Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

**Lyme Disease** is spread to people by a tiny deer tick. Symptoms can begin with a skin rash characterized by large, red, donut-shaped welts. Other symptoms are similar to those of the flu: headache, fever, chills, muscle aches, and stiff neck. Symptoms generally appear from 1 to 3 weeks following a tick bite.

**Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever** is carried by the large and more readily seen dog tick. Symptoms usually begin with a rash, appearing first on the wrists and ankles and spreading to other parts of the body. Other symptoms, including a high fever, chills, and severe headache, usually appear 3 to 10 days after the tick bite.

Anyone who is bitten by an *infected* tick can get either of these two diseases. Ticks are most commonly found in bushy, wooded, or tall grassy areas. They are not found on open sandy beaches, but can be found in the brush or grass near beaches. **The greatest chance of being infected is while walking barelegged through brush or tall grass from May through August.**

Not all ticks carry Lyme Disease or Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. A tick bite does not mean that disease will follow, and **prompt removal of a tick will lessen any chance of disease transmission.**

When you spend time outdoors in areas with ticks, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Keep shirts tucked into pants and pant legs tucked into socks. Wear sneakers instead of sandals. Wear light-colored clothing. Ticks are dark in color and will be easier to see against a light background.

**Conduct daily tick checks!** Ticks removed within 24 hours of attachment are unlikely to transmit Lyme Disease. Ticks are most often found on the thigh, flank, underarm, and legs, and are very small. Look for new “freckles”.

**If you find a tick**, remove it immediately. Deer ticks are very small and hard, about the size of a pinhead. They are orange-red or black, depending on their stage of growth, and prefer to attach themselves to a human host under the hair. Dog ticks are larger, ranging from 1/10 to 1/4 inch in length. They are brown and prefer to attach themselves under the hair or on protected parts of the body.

**To remove a tick**, use tweezers to grip the tick body firmly by the mouthparts and pull it straight out. If using fingers, place a protective covering between your fingers and the tick, and wash your hands afterwards. Wash the bitten area with soap and water.

*Prevention is the key. If you don't get bitten, you can't get tick-borne disease.*