

Tickborne Disease



As we look forward to warmer weather and melting snow, tick season is also approaching. A variety of diseases may be spread by ticks in Minnesota. The majority of tickborne diseases result from the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. You can decrease your chance of being exposed to tickborne disease by knowing what to look for and taking a few preventative steps.

TICK TYPES

There are about a dozen different types of ticks in Minnesota. Not all of them spread disease. Here are three to watch out for.

blacklegged tick

Also known as a deer tick. 3-5 millimeters in length with flat, oval shaped bodies and 8 legs. Dark reddish brown and black in color. Causes the most tickborne disease in Minnesota.

American dog tick

Also known as a wood tick. 5-15 millimeters in length with brown and red dotted bodies and 8 legs. Bites are common, but they rarely spread disease.

lone star tick

Brown to tan in color. 8 legs. 6-12 millimeters in length. Rarely found in Minnesota, but can spread disease.

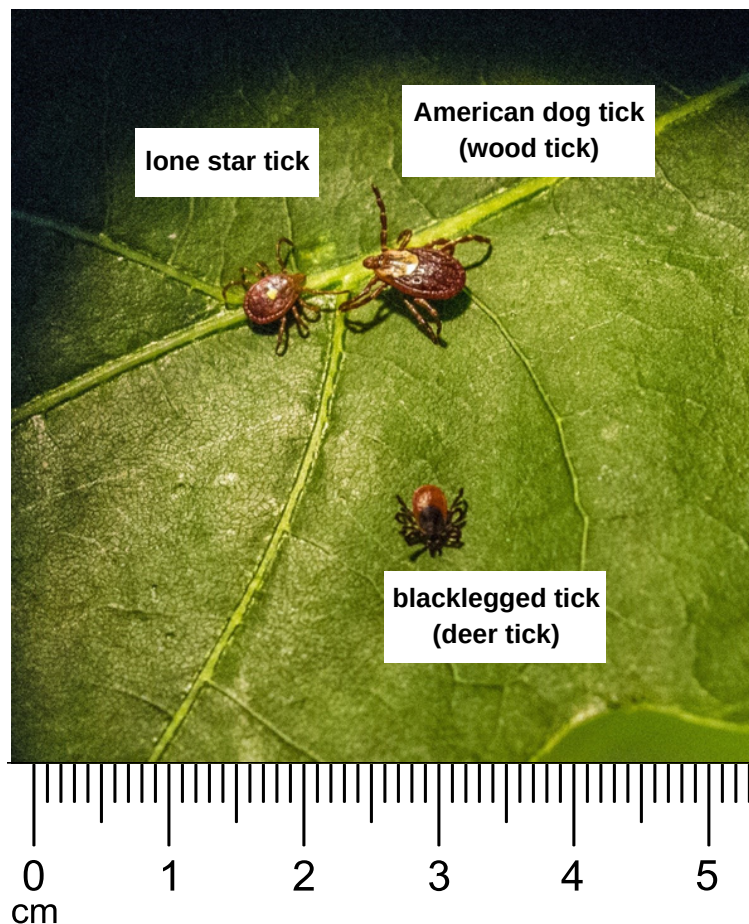


Image source: [Minnesota Department of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/ticks/)

PREVENTING TICKBORNE DISEASE

Be aware

- Some ticks are most active in the spring and fall, while others are most active in the spring and early summer. Whenever it is warm outside (above freezing with little to no snow cover), ticks may be active.
- Blacklegged ticks are found in wooded or brushy areas while American dog ticks are found in grassy, more open habitat and woods.

Use tick repellent

- Choose an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered product so you know it is safe and effective against tick bites. Use the EPA's [interactive website \(https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you\)](https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you) for help finding a product.
- Products containing permethrin, which are used on clothing and gear, are especially recommended for people who spend a lot of time in wooded areas. Do not use permethrin on your skin.
- Standard DEET-based products are another option. Use a product containing no more than 30 percent DEET for adults. Concentrations up to 30 percent DEET are also safe for children (according to reports from the American Academy of Pediatrics). Do not use DEET for infants under two months of age.

PREVENTING TICKBORNE DISEASE

Check for ticks

- Check yourself and your children after being outdoors in woody, brushy, or grassy areas.
- Check frequently for ticks--at least once a day.
- Bathe or shower after coming indoors to wash off and more easily find ticks that may be crawling on or attached to you.
- Search your entire body closely, especially hard-to-see areas (e.g. behind knees, groin area, and arm pits).
- Ticks may look like a speck of dirt or freckle on skin. Use a family member, friend, or a mirror to help you.

If you find a tick on yourself, remove it as soon as possible

- Prompt tick removal is important in order to lower your risk of tickborne disease transmission.
- Use a pair of tweezers or your fingers to grasp the tick by the head, close to the skin.
- Pull the tick outward slowly, gently, and steadily
- Clean the area with soap and water.
- Avoid folk remedies like Vaseline®, nail polish remover or burning matches - they are not safe or effective.
- Watch the [Minnesota Department of Health's video on tick removal](https://youtu.be/GGRSy0u_fPU) (https://youtu.be/GGRSy0u_fPU)

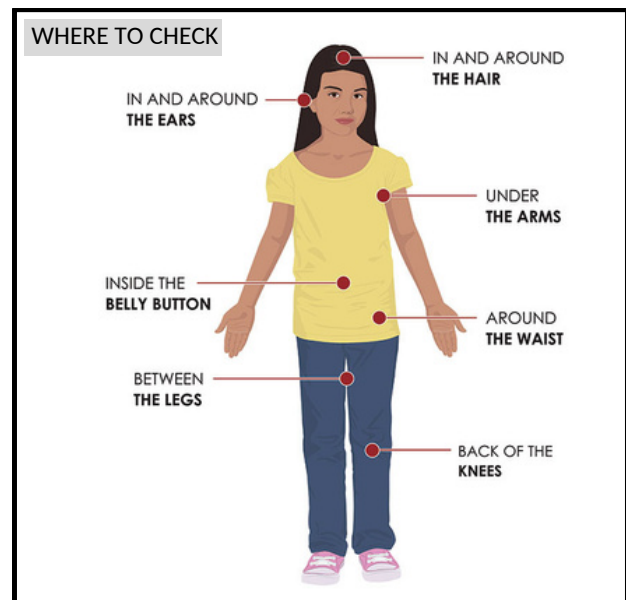


Image source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/)

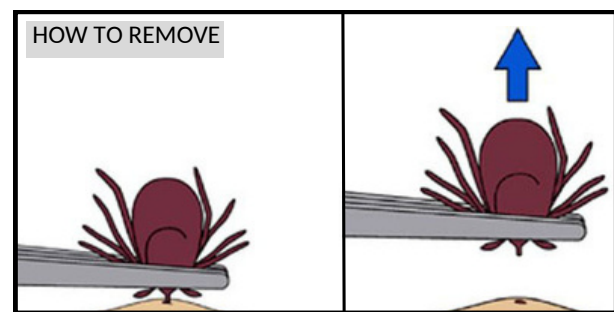


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SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF DISEASE

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by tick bite. It is the most commonly reported tickborne disease in Minnesota and the United States. People can get Lyme disease through the bite of a blacklegged tick that is infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria. Not all blacklegged ticks carry these bacteria and not all people bitten by a blacklegged tick will get sick.

Early symptoms usually appear within 30 days of being infected. Contact your doctor if you notice:

- Rash (May look like a bull's-eye, or a red ring with a clear center that may grow to several inches in width. May not be itchy or painful. Not everyone gets or sees a rash and not all rashes look like a bull's-eye.)
- Fever or chills
- Muscle or joint pain
- Headache
- Tiredness or weakness

If not treated, more severe symptoms may occur weeks or months later:

- multiple rashes
- paralysis on one side of the face
- weakness or numbness in the arms or legs
- irregular heartbeat
- swelling in one or more joints

To learn more about other tickborne diseases, visit the [Minnesota Department of Health's webpage on diseases that can be transmitted by ticks](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/diseases.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/diseases.html>).

Sources:

- Minnesota Department of Health - [Tickborne Diseases](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/tickborne/index.html>)
- Centers for Disease Control - [Ticks Home](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>)