



## What is a tick?

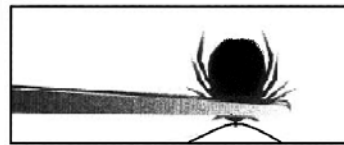
- A tick is a tiny, dark, 8-legged, blood-sucking parasite with a small head and a larger body.
- Ticks can be found in tall grass, brush or wooded areas. The tick latches on to humans or animals, looking for a warm, hairy place to feed (nape of neck, armpits, groin or waist). Once the tick embeds its mouth parts, it feeds until it is filled with blood, then drops to the ground to lay its eggs.
- The most common tick found in Saskatchewan is the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), or “wood tick”, and does not transmit disease of significance to humans.
- The black-legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), or “deer tick”, can carry a bacteria that causes Lyme disease. It is common in parts of the USA, eastern Canada and Manitoba, but has now started to appear in parts of Saskatchewan, mainly the Qu’Appelle Valley.

## How to remove ticks

- Remove ticks as soon as possible.
- Avoid folklore remedies such as “painting” the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly, or using heat to make the tick detach from the skin as this may cause it to inject germs into the wound. Your goal is to remove the tick as quickly as possible—not waiting for it to detach.
- Use fine-tipped tweezers and grasp the mouth of the tick as close as possible to the skin and pull upward and out with a firm and steady pressure. Do not jerk or twist the tick.
- Do not handle the tick with bare hands.
- Be careful not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick, which may contain infectious fluids.
- Ticks removed from animals or people can be submitted for identification and testing. **See reverse for submission directions.**

- After removing the tick, apply an antiseptic such as rubbing alcohol to the site. Wash your hands.
- Contact your doctor if you are unable to remove the whole tick. Infection can occur if the tick’s mouth parts remain in the skin after attempting to remove it.
- Watch for signs of infection, such as redness and swelling. See your doctor if these occur.

A. Grab the tick at the mouth parts as close as possible to the skin.



B. Pull straight out.



## How to avoid ticks

- Reduce the number of ticks at home by trimming long grass, brush and weeds.
- Prevent ticks from attaching to skin:
  - wear light colored clothing to help show crawling ticks
  - tuck shirt into pants and pant legs into socks
  - wear high boots
  - wear a hat
  - walk on cleared paths where possible.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin 20% (Icaridin) on clothing and uncovered skin.
- Check skin, as well as clothing (inside and out) at the end of the day during tick season. Pay special attention to neck, armpits, groin and waist.
- Check pets that go into tall grass or weeded areas daily.

## ***Lyme disease in Saskatchewan***

- Overall risk for Lyme disease in our province is low, but not zero.
- From 2008-2017, over 26,000 ticks were collected and identified. 65 were black-legged ticks. Only 8 of those 65 tested positive for the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

### ***Symptoms***

- Generalized symptoms may include: fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes.
- A rash at the site of the bite develops in 70-80% of people infected, which can expand into a distinctive, red “bull’s-eye”.
- Later symptoms can include dizziness, abnormal heartbeat, and mental confusion and nervous system disorders.

### ***Diagnosis and Treatment***

- Lyme disease can be difficult to diagnose as symptoms can vary in severity and from person to person.
- If you develop symptoms after a known tick bite, see your health care provider immediately. Appropriate testing is the key to diagnosis. Encourage your health care provider to report a suspicion of Lyme disease to Public Health Communicable Disease Control.
- Visual documentation (digital photos) of the bull’s-eye rash can be useful in supporting a diagnosis of Lyme disease.
- If you saved the tick that bit you, it can be sent for testing.
- The Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory (RRPL) follows testing guidelines set out by the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network. Initial blood testing is done at

- RRPL, while confirmatory testing is done at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg. This is considered to be the best diagnostic testing for Lyme disease and should be used along with clinical information about the patient.
- Treatment is most successful in the early stages of the disease and involves a course of antibiotics for 2-3 weeks.

### ***Submitting Ticks for Testing***

- Ticks should be placed in a small, clean hard plastic container. Place a small amount of moistened cotton or tissue in bottle to keep ticks alive during transport. Do not freeze the container at any point.
- Do not add alcohol or other preservatives to the container as it may interfere with testing.
- Label the container with collector’s name, location and date of collection, as well as species (i.e. human, dog) from which tick was taken.
- Ticks taken from people or animals, accompanied by a completed Tick Submission form, can be dropped off at Public Health Communicable Disease Control, Rural Public Health Office or Western College of Veterinary Medicine:

#### **Western College of Veterinary Medicine**

Department of Veterinary Microbiology

Rm 2604

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, SK. S7N 5B4

<https://research-groups.usask.ca/chilton/tick-surveillance.php>

- All black-legged ticks will be tested for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

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For more information, call Population and Public Health-  
Communicable Disease Control at **306-655-4612**

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