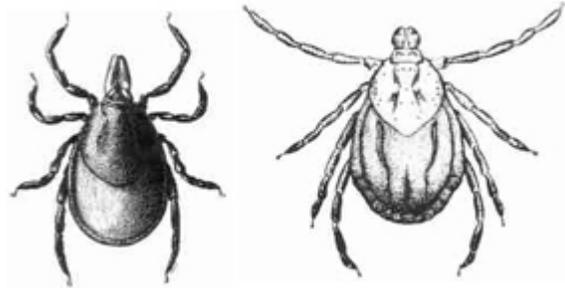


## Protecting Yourself from Ticks

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Deer tick or black-legged tick (left);  
American dog tick (right)



Ticks and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease are much in the news. With good reason — the incidence of Lyme disease and its vector, the deer tick, also called the black-legged tick, have been increasing annually, with record numbers in 2010. There are about a dozen additional tick species in the state. Ticks aren't enough to keep Mainers indoors but you should take steps to protect yourself, your family and your pets. Here's how.

### **Avoid Tick Habitat**

Wooded areas with shrubby undergrowth, grassy edges adjacent to woods, and open grassy areas are favorite tick habitats. Walk in the center of wooded paths and avoid vegetation along path edges or avoid tick-infested areas when possible. Keep pets out of tick-infested areas too.

### **Cover Up Outdoors**

- Wear long sleeves and long pants that are tight around the wrist, ankle, and neck. Tuck pants into socks. Yes, you'll look like a nerd, but it beats getting Lyme disease!
- Use a repellent containing DEET according to label directions — particularly on shoes, socks, and pant legs. Avoid applying high-concentration products to the skin, especially on children.
- People who must be in areas where ticks are prevalent may pre-treat protective clothing with a permethrin-containing product which both repels and kills ticks. *Caution:* this is not for use on skin; use only as directed on the label.
- Inspect yourself, your clothing, your children, your companion, and your pets for ticks when you return indoors. Ticks often attach in body folds, behind ears, and in the hair. If possible, shower and wash clothes immediately. Heat drying is effective in killing ticks.

- To protect pets, consult your veterinarian about tick repellents or, in high risk areas, the Lyme vaccine for dogs.

### **Create a Tick-Safe Zone Around Your Home**

Tick numbers can be reduced by making simple landscape changes to your property.

- In transition area between lawn and woods, keep a well-manicured border. Trim back tree branches that overhang the lawn. Clear out low brush, vines and leaf litter. Keep weeds cut. Install a wood chip, mulch or gravel barrier where your lawn meets the woods. The dry barrier makes it more difficult for the ticks to migrate.
- Reduce habitat for small mammals such as mice that support tick populations by clearing away brush, leaf litter, fallen trees and rocks each year. Compost or bag and remove leaf litter. Avoid use of ground cover vegetation in frequently used areas. Place woodpiles far from the house.
- Mow grass and brush low (3-4").
- Move bird feeders away from areas where people and pets play. Don't feed birds in spring and summer. Birds and rodents (that feed on spilled feed) carry ticks.
- Select deer-resistant flowers, shrubs or trees (see [Landscape Plants Rated by Deer Resistance](#), Rutgers: New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station) to keep deer and their hitchhiking ticks away.

### **Removal of Ticks**

- Use fine-tipped tweezers or a tick removal tool (readily available at stores) to remove attached ticks. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick; this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove mouthparts with tweezers.
- Do not squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick because its fluids may contain infectious organisms.
- Do not handle the tick with bare hands because infectious agents may enter through mucous membranes or breaks in the skin.
- Apply antiseptic to the bite and wash hands with soap and water.
- Consult a physician if you remove an engorged tick. Save the tick for identification in a small vial of alcohol. Medical care should be sought when a person is bitten by a deer tick or is exhibits Lyme disease symptoms.

### **For More Information:**

- Maine Medical Center Research Institute Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory  
[www.mmcri.org/lyme/lymehome.html](http://www.mmcri.org/lyme/lymehome.html)
- Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention [www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/epi/vector-borne/lyme/tick-prevention.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/epi/vector-borne/lyme/tick-prevention.shtml)
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension Bulletin #5047, [Ticks](#)  
<http://pmo.umext.maine.edu/factsht/Ticks.htm>
- Maine Board of Pesticides Control  
[www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/public/index.htm#mosquito](http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/public/index.htm#mosquito)