



NEWS RELEASE

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IDPH Warns Public to Avoid Tick Bites as Summer Season Gets Underway

SPRINGFIELD – With the Summer Season getting into full swing, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding all Illinoisans to take precautions against tick bites to prevent contracting illnesses such as Lyme disease, spotted fever group rickettsiosis, tularemia, ehrlichiosis, and babesiosis.

To avoid tick bites, people should conduct a thorough tick-check for themselves, their children and their pets after spending time in areas ticks are known to inhabit, such as in and near wooded areas, tall grass, and brush. Removing ticks within a 24-hour period reduces the risk of potential disease transmission.

IDPH has an agreement with the Illinois Natural History Survey Medical Entomology Laboratory (INHS MEL) to conduct active tick surveillance across the State. Ticks are collected and tested by the INHS MEL. The results are displayed on an interactive [Tick Surveillance Map](#) that documents the counties in Illinois where the different tick species have been confirmed and the types of pathogens present in those ticks.

Public health officials offer the following additional tips for how to avoid tickborne illnesses and have a healthy time in the outdoors:

- Learn about tick removal and symptom awareness ([IDPH website](#)).
- Walk in the center of trails. Avoid wooded, bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Wear light-colored clothing to make ticks easier to find. Tuck long pants into socks and boots.
- Apply an EPA-registered insect repellent containing 20% DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus according to label directions.
- Conduct full-body tick checks on family members (underarms, ears, belly button, behind knees, between legs, waist, hair and scalp) every two to three hours. Also check any gear or pets taken on outings.
- Put your clothes in the dryer on high heat for 10 minutes (or one hour for damp clothes) to kill ticks.

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- Bathe or shower within two hours after coming indoors.
- If you find a tick on yourself, it is often helpful to keep the tick for species identification. Place the tick in rubbing alcohol or in a sealed bag/container to bring to your healthcare provider, or you can submit the tick sample, or photos of ticks, to the INHS MEL for identification. Submission information can be found on the [INHS MEL website](#).

If you become ill with fever and/or rash after being in an area where ticks may have been, contact your health care provider. Some tick-borne illnesses can be life-threatening. For example, if untreated [Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever](#) may cause death as quickly as five days after symptom onset.

For more information on Lyme disease and tick prevention please visit the [IDPH website](#).

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