

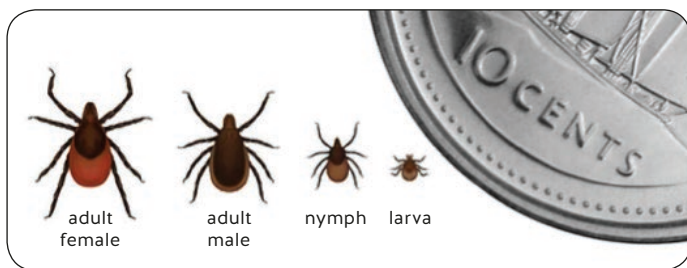
## Protecting yourself from ticks

### What are ticks?

Ticks are tiny bugs, which are related to mites, spiders and scorpions. Ticks feed on the blood of animals and require blood meals at certain times in their development cycle. Feeding can last from hours to days depending on the type of tick.



Western blacklegged tick  
(Photo courtesy of Dr. A. Loftis, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Tick life cycle  
(Image adapted from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Ticks may carry bacteria, parasites, or viruses. Lyme disease is an example of a tick-borne illness.

### Where are ticks found?

Ticks live in tall grass and wooded areas. Ticks are usually active in the months of April through October, and peak in the summer months of June through August. The time of year when ticks are active may vary with the geographic region and climate.

Populations of infected ticks are established in parts of B.C., including Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, the Lower Mainland and the Interior.

### Am I at risk of being bitten by a tick?

If you work outdoors in areas where it's wooded or there is tall grass, you may be exposed to tick-borne diseases spread from bites of infected ticks. Workers in the following occupations are especially at risk:

- Construction
- Landscaping
- Forestry
- Brush clearing
- Land surveying
- Farming
- Railroad work
- Oil field work
- Utility line work
- Park or wildlife management
- Other outdoor work

## What should I do if a tick bites me?

The most important thing is to make sure that you remove all of the tick, including the mouth parts that are buried in your skin. Also, do not squeeze the body of the tick when you are removing it. This can force its stomach contents into the wound and increase the chance of infection.

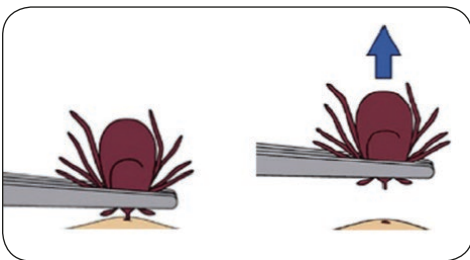


Adult female tick after and before a blood meal  
(Photo courtesy of Dr. M. Morshed, BC Centre for Disease Control)

If you have been bitten, inform your supervisor. Keep track of any signs and symptoms that may indicate an infection following a tick bite.

## How do I remove a tick properly?

- Use tweezers or forceps to gently get hold of the tick as close to the skin as possible. Don't touch the tick with your hands.
- Without squeezing the tick, steadily lift it straight off the skin. Avoid jerking it out. Try to make sure that all of the tick is removed.



(Image courtesy of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Once the tick has been removed, clean the bite area with soap and water, then disinfect the wound with antiseptic cream.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

## Where can I submit my tick?

Individuals are encouraged to submit ticks they find on themselves to their provincial tick surveillance program.

Ticks should be placed in a small crushproof bottle (for example, a pill bottle) with a piece of slightly damp paper towel to help keep the tick alive. Firmly tape the lid shut.

Seal the bottle in a plastic bag, put it in a cardboard box, and send the package to the following address:

BC Public Health Microbiology and  
Reference Laboratory  
Parasitology Section  
655 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver BC V5Z 4R4

Be sure to label the container with the shipping date, the name and address of the person bitten, what part of the body was bitten, and what part of the province the tick probably came from. Also include the name and address of your family physician.

## What are the signs and symptoms of tick-borne infections?

Symptoms can include, but are not limited to,

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pains
- Fatigue
- Skin rash
- Swollen lymph nodes

Tick-borne infections are more effectively treated if diagnosed early in the course of illness.



“Bull’s eye rash” caused by a tick bite  
(Image courtesy of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## How can I protect myself from tick bites?

- Wear light coloured clothing, tuck your top into your pants, and tuck your pants into your boots or socks.
- Use insect repellent that contains 20–30 percent DEET.
- Take a shower as soon as you can after working outdoors.
- Look for ticks on your body. Ticks are often found on the legs, thighs, back, arms, underarms, groin, behind the ears, and above the hairline.

## What can I do to stop the spread of ticks?

You can decrease tick populations by:

- Removing leaf litter
- Removing, mowing, and cutting back tall grass and brush
- Discouraging deer activity

## For more information

BC Centre for Disease Control  
(Lyme Disease Fact Sheet):

<http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/9F45908D-959A-442D-BB50-39897C53EF51/0/Lyme20110908.pdf>

The Public Health Agency of Canada  
(Lyme Disease):

<http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/lyme/index-eng.php>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Ticks):

<http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>