

Be tick aware

General information about ticks and tick bite prevention



Public Health
England

Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

What are ticks?

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. Depending on its development stage, the size of a tick varies. Nymphs are about the size of a poppy seed, while adult ticks look more like tiny spiders.



Where do you find ticks?

Ticks can survive in many places, but prefer areas with dense vegetation or long grass. The species most commonly found on people is *Ixodes ricinus*, more commonly known as the sheep or deer tick. They are usually found in woodlands, grassland, moorland, some urban parks and gardens.

How do you come into contact with ticks?

Ticks don't jump or fly, but wait until an animal or person brushes past to climb on. They then bite to attach to the skin and start to feed on the blood. It may take up to several days to complete their blood meal, before they drop back off.

Ticks can be found throughout the year, but are most active between spring and autumn.

Main health risks

Ticks can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which can lead to very serious conditions if left untreated. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include a circular rash, fatigue, and muscle and joint pain. More serious conditions such as viral-like meningitis, facial palsy, nerve damage and arthritis can develop without treatment, so prevention and early detection are crucial. Lyme disease can be treated with a course of antibiotics.

Perform a tick check!

Make it a habit to check your clothes and your body regularly for ticks when you're outdoors and again when you get home. Because it doesn't hurt you may not notice you've been bitten, so make sure you thoroughly check yourself, your children and your pets.

Ticks prefer warm, moist places on your body, especially the groin area, waist, arm pits, behind the knee and along hair lines, so look out for anything as tiny as a freckle or a speck of dirt.



Young children are more commonly bitten around the head, so be extra careful to check around the neck, behind the ears, and on the scalp.

Take simple steps to avoid coming into contact with ticks

- walk on clearly defined paths
- avoid dense vegetation wear light-coloured clothing so ticks are easier to spot and brush off
- use repellents such as DEET on yourself and a suitable insect repellent for your pets as recommended by your vet

If you have been bitten

Being tick aware by knowing what ticks look like, where they can be found, and practicing prevention behaviours will help you to avoid tick bites. However, if you do get bitten, removing the tick quickly and correctly can help to reduce

any potential risk.

Ticks insert a feeding tube into the skin, called a hypostome, which is covered in backward facing barbs. This can make it difficult to remove and why the correct tools are needed.



Remove the tick as soon as possible

- Use a pair of fine-tipped tweezers, or a tick removal tool
- Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible
- Pull upwards slowly and firmly to avoid leaving mouth parts in which can cause a localised infection. If mouth parts are left behind, gently remove with tweezers if possible
- If they are difficult to remove, do not worry as the skin's natural sloughing process will eventually expel them
- Cleaning the bite with antiseptic will reduce the chance of developing a localised infection
- Do not remove a tick by burning, covering with Vaseline or other substances – these other methods may delay prompt removal, increasing the chance of infection

Contact your GP if you begin to feel unwell and remember to tell them you were bitten by a tick.

For further information about ticks and Lyme disease please visit the following websites:

Wiltshire Council:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk and search for 'tick awareness'

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk and search for 'lyme disease'

Help us record ticks

Visit the Public Health England (PHE) website, www.phe.gov.uk for more information on how to take part and download a recording form to post with your specimens. For more information on British ticks or the PHE tick surveillance scheme, please visit www.gov.uk/phe

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You can contact Public Health in the following ways:

Tel: 0300 003 4566

Email: publichealth@wiltshires.gov.uk

Web: www.wiltshire.gov.uk

Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available on request in other languages and formats such as **large print** and audio. Please contact the council by telephone **0300 456 0100**, or email customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk