

Tick-Borne Diseases & Children

Public Health - Factsheet

This fact sheet provides information for parents, guardians and people working with children to reduce the potential for transmission of tick-borne diseases (TBDs). If you are caring for children, please keep in mind that the longer a tick is attached, the greater the likelihood of disease transmission. Promptly identifying and removing attached ticks can minimize the risk of TBD transmission.

While older children may be coached through preventative measures like tick checks (see www.manitoba.ca/tickborne for a tick check card), younger children will likely need assistance with some or all of the prevention measures listed in this fact sheet.

Why are tick-borne diseases more of a concern for children than adults?

Tick-borne diseases are more of a concern for children, especially children ages four to 11, because they spend a lot of time playing on the ground, so they are more likely to encounter ticks. Also, if bitten by a tick, children in this age group may simply remove the tick and not report it to their parents or caregivers.

Tick bites are usually less of a concern for infants and toddlers, because they are frequently bathed or have their diapers changed by their parents or caregivers, so it is more likely that a parent or caregiver would notice a tick bite.

How can I protect my child from tick-borne diseases?

Ticks can only spread disease if they bite, so preventing bites is the first line of defence against TBDs. Here are some things you can do to protect your child from tick bites:

- Apply an appropriate repellent containing DEET or Icaridin, being sure to follow the instructions on the product label. For more information, visit the Canadian Pediatric Society's website at www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/preventing-mosquito-and-tick-bites
- Minimize your child's exposure to ticks by:
 - using trails and keeping to the centre of paths to avoid brushing up against vegetation
 - dressing your child in light-coloured clothing, long pants and long sleeved shirts where possible
 - tucking your child's shirt into their pants, and their pants into their socks, to create a barrier for ticks
 - drying your children's clothes on the highest heat setting for 10 minutes in a dryer. If clothes are soiled, wash first in hot water, then dry on high heat until completely dry.
- Check your child for ticks as soon as possible, after coming inside from the outdoors. After your child has spent time outdoors, bathing your child is a good way to check their body for ticks.
- In an area with good lighting, check your child's hairline, ears, armpits, belly button, groin, behind the knees, between the toes and anywhere there is pressure contact with clothing (e.g., behind watch straps or elastic bands of clothing). Note that a tick can sometimes resemble a mole and be as small as a poppy seed.
- Remove any ticks promptly after discovery. This will reduce the likelihood that a disease-causing agent can be transmitted.

How do I remove a tick that has bitten my child and is still attached?

Use tweezers to grasp the tick near its head, as close to the skin as possible. Pull slowly upward with steady pressure until the tick is released from the skin. The tick does not let go. Instead, you are pulling the mouth parts out of the skin. Some skin may be visible attached to the tick when you finish removing it. Once the tick is removed, wash the bite area with soap and water.

Save the tick in a sealable bag and note the date of removal on a calendar for future reference. If your child develops symptoms of a TBD, see a health care provider.

Ticks can be submitted for identification using the Manitoba Tick Checker (<https://forms.gov.mb.ca/tickSubmission/>).

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For more information about tick-borne diseases, contact your health care provider or call Health Links-Info Sante at **204-788-8200** (Winnipeg) or toll free at **1-888-315-9257**.

Prevention is the first line of defense against tick-borne diseases.

For more tick-related information, including signs and symptoms of common TBDs, how ticks spread disease, surveillance data and maps showing where ticks are found, and assorted images and prevention materials, please visit:

www.manitoba.ca/tickborne