



Public Health Services

# Ticks

## What is a tick?

- A tick is a tiny, dark, 8-legged, blood-sucking parasite with a small head and a larger body.
- Ticks can be found in tall grass, trees and shrubs. The tick latches on to humans or animals, looking for a warm, hairy place to feed (e.g. nape of the neck, armpits, groin or waist). Once the tick embeds its mouth parts, it feeds until it is filled with blood, then drops to the ground to lay its eggs.
- The most common types of tick in Saskatchewan are the Rocky Mountain Wood and the American Dog tick.
- The black-legged tick, or “deer tick”, which is known to carry Lyme disease, is very uncommon in Saskatchewan. Ticks common to Saskatchewan do not usually present a health risk.
- The bite of an infected *Ixodes ricinus* or “castor-bean” tick, common throughout central and eastern Europe can lead to an illness known as Tick-borne Encephalitis.

## How to remove ticks:

- Remove ticks as soon as possible.
- Do not apply mineral oil, vaseline or anything else to remove the tick as this may cause it to inject germs into the wound.
- Use fine-tipped tweezers and grasp the mouth of the tick as close as possible to the skin and pull upward and out with a firm and steady pressure. Do not jerk or twist the tick.

- Do not handle the tick with bare hands.
- Be careful not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick, which may contain infectious fluids.
- After removing the tick, apply an antiseptic such as rubbing alcohol to the site. Wash your hands.
- Contact your doctor if you are unable to remove the whole tick. Infection can occur if the tick’s mouth parts remain in the skin when attempting to remove it.
- Watch for signs of infection, such as redness and swelling. See your doctor if these occur.

## How to avoid ticks:

- Reduce the number of ticks by trimming long grass, brush and weeds.
- Prevent ticks from attaching to skin:
  - wear light colored clothing to help show crawling ticks
  - tuck shirt into pants and pant legs into socks
  - wear high boots
  - wear a hat
  - walk on cleared paths when possible.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET on clothing and uncovered skin.
- Check skin, as well as clothing (inside and out) at the end of the day during tick season. Pay special attention to neck, pubic area and breasts.
- Daily, check pets that go into tall grass or weeded areas.

**For more information contact your doctor or Public Health Services at 655-4612**