

## TICKS

### What You Need to Know

- ▲ Ticks are all around us. They live in grassy areas (lawns) as well as in brush and wooded areas.
- ▲ They often come inside houses on pets or clothing.
- ▲ Ticks cannot “jump”, but rather wait patiently on grasses for a “warm” body to pass. When the “warm” body (a.k.a. host) comes close enough, the tick uses especially designed hooks on its legs to attach itself to the new host.
- ▲ Ticks can move surprisingly fast (for their size), and can travel from ankle to neck in less than an hour.
- ▲ Depending on tick species and stage of growth, ticks can be the size of a period on this page, or as big as a pea when engorged with blood. Ticks generally require less than 12 hours to begin feeding (burrow through skin layers to the blood supply underneath) depending on the thickness of the skin. They seek thin-skinned areas.
- ▲ Tick mouth parts are designed to keep a firm hold on the host (they have reverse serrations), and cannot be easily removed from the host either by the tick or by you.
- ▲ All tick species can carry disease. The predominant species in our area are the Dog Tick and the Deer Tick.



### Finding a Tick

- ▲ Ticks are active anytime the air temperature is above freezing (above 32°F). The warmer the temperature, the more active ticks are.
- ▲ You need to “look” to find. Everyone who goes outside, or has household pets that go outside, should do a “head-to-toe, crack-and-crevice” tick search EVERY night – EVERYONE...
- ▲ Finding a tick early and removing it is much better than finding it after it has begun to feed.

### Removing a Tick

- ▲ NEVER grasp a tick by its abdomen when removing. Doing so squeezes the tick’s stomach contents into your body, which increases the likelihood of a significant medical problem.
- ▲ ALWAYS use fine forceps (jeweler’s type) to grasp the tick as close to your skin (between the head/mouth parts and you) as possible. Use a gentle, steady pull until one of two things happens: either the tick will let go, or the tick will separate from its mouth parts, leaving them in your skin. You should have any embedded mouth parts removed.
- ▲ Clean the area and apply a topical antibiotic as you would for a splinter.
- ▲ Watch the area for signs of infection (red, swollen, painful) or a reaction to the tick bite (any rash, and especially a rash that looks like a bullseye). If any of these occur, contact your physician or come to the Emergency Department.
- ▲ NEVER apply alcohol, grease, nail polish, glue, etc. to the tick in an effort to have it let go.
- ▲ NEVER apply flame, lighted cigarettes or other heat sources to the tick. This most often results in burning yourself and/or killing the tick – but not having it let go.