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Re: Risk of Tick Exposure or Tick Bites

Dear Parent/Guardian(s),

It's that time of the year again! Tick season! Ticks can make us sick, so it is important to know how to avoid them what to do if you encounter them. Is your family prepared?

Ticks can bite any time of the year, but they are most active from spring through late fall. To assist you and your family in preventing ticks and tick-borne illness our school put together this letter to address some basic tick questions and concerns. Read the rest of this letter and learn the tips and tricks you need to know to protect your family and reduce the risk of and tick-borne disease.

Some diseases carried by ticks can have lasting effects, if not prevented or treated. While there are several kinds of ticks inour area, we only want to focus on the three most commonly encountered types of ticks. They include the blackleggedtick and Westerned blacklegged tick, also called *"deer ticks"* (Ixodes scapularis and Ixodes pacificus), the lone star tick (Amblyomma americanum) and the American dog tick (Dermacentor variabilis). These different types of ticks transmit different germs: blacklegged ticks can transmit the germs causing Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, hard tick relapsing fever, and Powassan virus disease. Lone star ticks carry the germs causing human and canine ehrlichiosis, the rare Heartland and Bourbon viruses, and their bites also have been associated with stimulating a red meat allergy is some people. American dog ticks carry a variety of spotted fever group bacteria including the highly

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dangerous germ causing Rocky Mountain Spotted fever. They also rarely are responsible for transmitting the germ causing tularemia (CDC, 2018). Three different types of ticks—lots of different types of germs and levels of disease risk; that's why it's so important to accurately identify what type of tick is biting (more on that below).

What Can You Do To Prevent And Protect Your Child/Children From Tick Bites?

There are several things you can do to prevent tick bites including:

1. Using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing at least 20% DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5% permethrin.(CDC, 2018 and EPA, 2014). Use the 'Insect Repellent Locator' or 'Find the Repellent that is Right for You' websites (see Resources below) for help in selecting an effective repellent. Be sure to read the product label carefully before purchasing to ensure it is the right one for your intended use, and use the repellent exactly as directed on the label.
2. Anytime you are outside or plan to be in wooded areas or areas with high grass, bushes, hiking trails or weeds.
    a. Dress protectively (wear long-sleeves and long pants tucked into socks).
    b. Check yourself and your family members daily for ticks after returning indoors. See the graphic with the specific locations to check.

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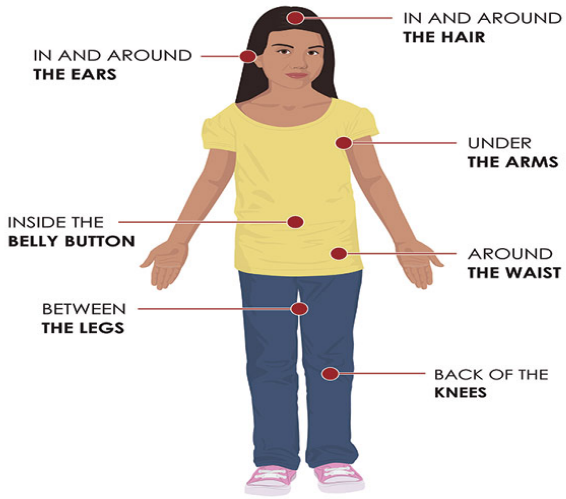

(Areas to check for ticks graphic: CDC, 2018**)**

c. After being outside or playing in the yard, immediately remove the clothes and dry those clothes on high heat for at least 10 minutes. Hot water won't kill ticks, but hot dryers will(TickEncounter, 2018).

What To Do If You Suspect A Tick Bite?

- The key and main goal is to remove the tick as soon as possible and identify which type of tick it is. You can have your tick identified via TickEncounter.org or check with your local health department (*School nurses cannot diagnose tick species). ***The resource information provided in no way implies endorsement of listed products or services by NASN. No endorsement is intended or implied.***
- See your primary care provider if you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick. Be sure to tell the doctor about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred, and where you most likely acquired the tick(CDC, 2018).

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How Do You Properly Remove A Tick?

First, avoid tick removal myths that have been proven ineffective or unsafe. Use pointy tweezers or a tick removal tool to remove ticks. Do not apply nail polish, petroleum jelly, or heat— these 'irritation' methods may cause the tick to rapidly inject the disease-causing germs into your skin, increasing the risk of tick-borne disease.

To Remove a Tick:

- Stretch the skin slightly so you can get as close to the skin as possible, and use a fine-tipped or pointy tweezers to firmly grab the tick's head end. If you do not have fine-tipped tweezers, a tick removal tool that allows you to remove the tick by sliding or pulling it off in a smooth, straight motion will also work. Be sure to get as close to the head of the tick as possible, to avoid squeezing the tick's body which can increase the likelihood the tick will inject disease-causing germs.

  Note to remember: DO NOT use blunt or flat shaped tweezers to remove a tick. These are not as effective and can increase the risk of tearing the tick body or putting disease-causing germs into the bite area.

- Pull tweezers upward with steady, even and slow pressure. Similarly, use steady, even pressure if using a tick removal tool designed to slide forward or backward.
  Note to remember: DO NOT twist or jerk the tick, because this can cause the tick to inject more germs into the skin and may cause the head to break off and stay in the skin. Remove the tick as soon as you can to reduce the risk of infection.

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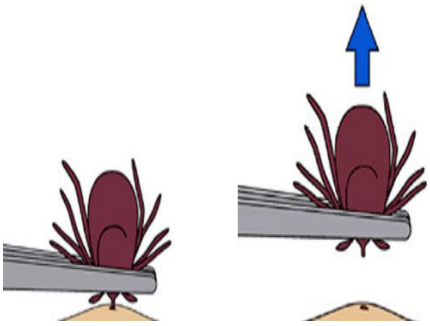
(Tick removal spoon)


(Tick tweezer removal. CDC, 2018)

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- After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. **Note to remember:** If the head (the mouth area) of the tick breaks off and remains embedded in the skin this is not serious. If you cannot easily remove the head parts easily, leave them alone, and simply clean the bite with soapy water or rubbing alcohol, apply an antiseptic cream and let the skin heal.

At the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), it's our goal to keep your child in school, healthy, safe, and ready to learn. It's encouraged and important that as parents you keep the lines of communication open with the school nurse and notify them if your child has been exposed or has been bitten by a tick recently to assist with monitoring of signs or symptoms of any of the potential viruses or diseases after tick exposure. For questions about tick-borne diseases,, please contact your child's primary care provider for guidance and follow-up as needed. If you would like more information on how to prevent tick exposures and bites you can view the following resources below for additional information.

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Resources

- **United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC): Ticks** https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/
- **Environmental Protection Agency:Find the Repellent that is Right for You:** https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you
- **National Pesticide Information Center- Insect Repellent Locator (National Pesticide Information Center):** http://pi.ace.orst.edu/repellents/
- **University of Maine: Tick removal videos** https://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/tick-removal/
- **University of Rhode Island- Tick Encounter Tick Identification resources:** www.Tickencounter.org

References

1) Center for Disease Control and Prevention (last updated: July 2, 2018): *Stop ticks and avoid Lyme and other tickborne diseases.* National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/Features/StopTicks/
2) University of Maine Cooperative Extension: Insect Pests, Ticks and Plant Diseases https://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/tick-removal/
3) University of Rhode Island TickEncounter Resource Center (2018). http://tickencounter.org
4) United States Environmental Protection Agency (June 2014). *Tick safety in schools: Integrated pest management for protecting children from tick-borne diseases.* Center of Expertise for School IPM. Retrieved from: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-11/documents/tick-safety-in-schools.pdf