

Tick Bite: Care Instructions



Overview

Ticks are small spiderlike animals. They bite to fasten themselves onto your skin and feed on your blood.

Ticks can carry diseases. But most ticks do not carry diseases, and most tick bites do not cause serious health problems.

Some people may have an allergic reaction to a tick bite. This reaction may be mild, with symptoms like itching and swelling. In rare cases, a severe allergic reaction may occur.

Most of the time, all you need to do for a tick bite is relieve any symptoms you may have.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Put ice or a cold pack on the bite for 15 to 20 minutes once an hour. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

- Try an over-the-counter medicine to relieve itching, redness, swelling, and pain. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
 - Take an antihistamine medicine to help relieve itching, redness, and swelling.
 - Use a spray of local anesthetic that contains benzocaine, such as Solarcaine. It may help relieve pain. If your skin reacts to the spray, stop using it.
 - Put calamine lotion on the skin. It may help relieve itching.

To avoid tick bites

- Avoid ticks:
 - Learn where ticks are found in your community, and stay away from those areas if possible.
 - Cover as much of your body as possible when you work or play in grassy or wooded areas.
 - Use insect repellents, such as products containing DEET. You can spray them on your skin.
 - Take steps to control ticks on your property if you live in an area where Lyme disease occurs. Clear leaves, brush, tall grasses, woodpiles, and stone fences from around your house and the edges of your yard or garden. This may help get rid of ticks.
- When you come in from outdoors, check your body for ticks, including your groin, head, and underarms. The ticks may be about the size of a sesame seed. If no one else can help you check for ticks on your scalp, comb your hair with a fine-tooth comb.
- If you find a tick, remove it quickly. Use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to its mouth (the part in your skin) as possible. Slowly pull the tick straight out—do not twist or yank—until its mouth releases from your skin. If part of the tick stays in the skin, leave it alone. It will likely come out on its own in a few days.
- Ticks can come into your house on clothing, outdoor gear, and pets. These ticks can fall off and attach to you.
 - Check your clothing and outdoor gear. Remove any ticks you find. Then put your clothing in a clothes dryer on high heat for about 4 minutes to kill any ticks that might remain.
 - Check your pets for ticks after they have been outdoors.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have symptoms of a severe allergic reaction. These may include:
 - Sudden raised, red areas (hives) all over your body.
 - Swelling of the throat, mouth, lips, or tongue.
 - Trouble breathing.
 - Passing out (losing consciousness). Or you may feel very lightheaded or suddenly feel weak, confused, or restless.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the bite.
 - Red streaks leading from the bite.

- Pus draining from the bite.
- A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You develop a new rash.
- You have joint pain.
- You are very tired.
- You have flu-like symptoms.
- You have symptoms for more than 1 week.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **L087** in the search box to learn more about "**Tick Bite: Care Instructions**".

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