



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Take precautions against ticks this season

With tick season in full swing, the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services is reminding people to protect themselves and their animals against ticks.

The tiny, spider-like bugs attach themselves onto the skin of people and animals and feed on their blood. While many tick species are not harmful, there are some that transmit disease.

"It's a good idea to take precautions against ticks year-around, but most important in the spring and summer months," said DHHS Public Health Director Susan Buckley. "Many of us spend as much of the summer as we can participating in outdoor recreational activities, making exposure to ticks common."

Only one tick found locally has the bacterium that causes Lyme disease—the western blacklegged tick.

"The only way to reduce the risk of contracting a tick-borne illness is by taking precautions against tick bites," Buckley said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following tips to stay tick-free this season:

- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter
- Walk in the center of trails
- Repel ticks with DEET or permethrin. Use repellents that contain 20 to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin. It remains protective through several

washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and may be protective longer.

- Find and remove ticks from your body
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that are crawling on you.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and especially in their hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats and day packs.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not jerk or twist it. Make sure the entire tick has been removed, including the head. Once the tick has been removed, clean the area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub or soap and water.

The Public Health Lab offers free tick identification. After removing a tick, if you want to know what type it is, place the entire thing in a sealed container or zip-close bag with a paper towel moistened with water.

If the tick is identified by lab staff as a western blacklegged tick, they can test it for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, for a \$40 fee.

The Public Health Lab is located at 529 I St. in Eureka. For more information about tick testing, call 707-268-2179.

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