











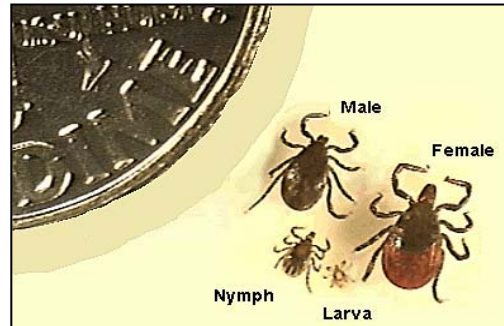
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Just the Facts...

Tick Control Around the Home









First, some basic facts about ticks:






-  There are over 800 species of ticks worldwide.
-  Ticks must feed on the blood of an animal (the host) in order to grow (molt to different stages) and reproduce (lay thousands of eggs).
-  Most ticks go through one inactive stage (egg) and three active stages (larva, then nymph, and finally adult) in their life cycle. The whole life cycle takes 1 to 2 years and the tick must feed (take a blood meal) once at each active stage. A blood meal takes several days to complete.
-  Ticks don't fly or jump. Rather, a tick climbs to the ends of blades of grass or weeds and waits quietly with its front legs extended until it can grab onto a passing host.
-  Ticks can spread diseases to people, pets, and other animals. Germs that may be present in their saliva are transmitted as they feed on the person or animal. These germs include the bacteria and viruses that cause such serious diseases as Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and human ehrlichiosis.
-  Not all ticks are infected. However, you can't tell if a tick is infected or not just by looking at it. Therefore, it is important to remove any tick that is attached to your skin as soon as possible. Ticks that are just crawling on you cannot transmit diseases.
-  Ticks are most common in woods or overgrown places where the ground is covered with leaf litter, thick weeds, or high grass. These are the areas where ticks are not only protected from the harsh drying effects of the sun and wind, but also where their animal hosts (such as mice and deer) live.
-  Ticks may sometimes be found on well-mowed lawns, or even inside your home. This is because they drop off of pets or other animals that cross over or enter these areas.



The relative size of *Ixodes scapularis* (blacklegged tick, a.k.a. 'deer tick') as compared to the side of a dime.

The best way to control ticks is to remove high grass, weeds, leaf litter, and undergrowth from around your home. Chemicals (pesticides) that kill ticks can be applied to your yard as a last resort if large numbers of ticks are present.




-  Create 'tick-free' zones around your home by cutting back wooded areas and increasing the size of open lawn.
-  Keep your lawn well mowed, to a height of 3 inches or less. This lowers the humidity at ground level, making it difficult for ticks to survive. Also, mice and other small animal hosts avoid these neatly trimmed areas because they cannot easily hide or find food and nesting materials.
-  Remove brush, weeds, leaf litter, and other yard debris that attract ticks and their hosts.
-  Rake back leaf litter and cut away undergrowth several feet into the edge of any woods that are on or next to your yard.
-  Eliminate dense plant beds close to your house, such as ivy and pachysandra.
-  Move woodpiles, birdfeeders and birdbaths as far from your house as possible. Mice and chipmunks hide and nest in woodpiles, and eat spilled food from birdfeeders. Birds can spread immature ticks over great distances as they migrate, and they may drop ticks in your yard as they use feeders and birdbaths.
-  Keep garbage in tightly closed cans and don't put pet food outside or purposely attract and feed wild animals.
-  Reduce the plants in your yard that deer love to eat (such as azaleas, rhododendrons, arborvitae, and crabapple) and increase the plants that they don't like (such as Colorado blue spruce, Scotch pine, boxwood, daffodils and marigolds). Extension agencies and local nurseries can offer more suggestions for your area.

-  Consider fencing to keep out larger animals, such as deer, as well as neighborhood pets. Ten-foot high fences may be necessary to completely keep out deer. Using an electrified fence may also be helpful.
-  Keep clotheslines high off the ground and out in the open so laundry will not touch vegetation.
-  Keep picnic tables and lawn furniture as far from any woods, shrubs, and undergrowth as possible.
-  Move children's play areas as far away as possible from woods or other overgrown sites. Consider using fences to keep children from entering tick habitat.
-  Create your vegetable and flower gardens in the middle of large areas of open lawn.

It is rare for a tick infestation to occur indoors. However, this can happen if a fully fed female tick falls off a pet and lays its eggs. This may occur in a location like pet bedding, carpeting, furniture upholstery, or crevices in floors and walls. In such a case, vacuum up as many of the ticks as possible, then seal the vacuum bag inside a plastic bag and dispose of it in an outdoor trash can. If possible, first place the sealed bag in the freezer for a couple of days to kill most of the ticks before placing it in the trash. Wash all removable bedding or cloth items in hot, soapy water, and apply an appropriate pesticide to all infested areas (see section on Chemical Control Options). It is best to hire a professional pest controller to perform the pesticide treatment.

More often, a single tick is carried inside on either a pet's fur or a person's clothing. It may then crawl onto another family member, searching for a blood meal.

Inside the home, you can reduce the potential for exposure to ticks by following these suggestions:

-  Keep small animals like mice and cute fluffy kittens out of your home by closing up gaps around doors, windows, and other places.
-  Check your clothing carefully for ticks before you come inside, and check your whole body once you're indoors.
-  Follow this advice if you have pets that go outdoors:
 - o Groom them carefully for ticks every time they've been outside.
 - o Designate specific sleeping areas for your pets, and check their bedding routinely for ticks that might drop off of them while they sleep.
 - o Keep pets off of furniture where ticks can become hidden in the fabric or cushions.
 - o Seek your veterinarian's advice before using flea and tick control products on your pet or it's bedding. Remember that exposing your pet to more than one type of treatment (flea and tick collars, dips, baths, or powders) within a short period of time might seriously harm your pet.

Chemical Control Options

Applying pesticides (chemicals that will kill ticks) should be considered only as a last resort. It is best to hire a professional pest control company to do this.

Before deciding to apply pesticides, your property should be sampled for ticks. Your yard may not necessarily contain large numbers of ticks, even if you live in a county or other local area where ticks are numerous, or where there is a high rate of tick-borne disease. Sampling can be accomplished by using a 'tick drag or flag' (white flannel fabric attached to a pole that is dragged across, or poked into, the vegetation. Ticks, if they are present, will cling to the fabric.). If tick levels are high, pesticide treatment may be justified.

Pesticides come in both liquid and granular form. The type of vegetation in your yard and the stage of the ticks that are present will help determine what kind of product is best for your situation. Liquid pesticides will kill ticks that are crawling out in the open. Granular pesticides will penetrate leaf litter to kill ticks that are hatching, molting, or waiting out the cold weather (overwintering). For example, for blacklegged ticks (also known as deer ticks) in the northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, liquid pesticides can be used to kill nymphs in the spring, larvae in the summer, or adults in the fall. Granular pesticides will kill nymphs that are overwintering (in the fall) or larvae that are hatching from eggs (in the early summer). Some pesticides are restricted for use only by licensed pesticide applicators.

Here are some of the safest pesticides that are effective for controlling ticks. All products may not be registered for use in all states.

Class of pesticide	Examples
Carbamates	Carbaryl
Pyrethroids	Permethrin, deltamethrin, cyfluthrin
Pyrethrums	Plant extracts called pyrethrins, primarily for use inside the home because they break down so quickly

Personal Protective Measures

Despite your best efforts, it may be impossible to keep your yard entirely free of ticks and their animal hosts. It is therefore important to use personal protective measures. This includes wearing clothing that will prevent ticks from reaching your skin, such as long sleeves and long pants. Tuck your shirt into your pants and your pant cuffs into your socks or boots. Use an insect repellent containing **DEET** (N,N, diethyl-m-toluamide) on your exposed skin (skin that is not covered with clothing). Use an insect repellent containing **permethrin** on your clothing. Always **FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS** when applying repellents. Be sure to check your clothing and body carefully for ticks when you've been outdoors.