

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Out-Patient Clinic

100 Old Billerica Road, Bedford MA 01730

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The Importance of Tick Checks

by Susan Cusson, NP



With the warm weather comes more outdoor activities. Along with all the positive benefits being outdoors don't forget to protect yourself against some common risks. Health officials are warning that the number of Americans infected by mosquito and tick bites has more than tripled in recent years. Tick borne diseases like Lyme have been increasing in the Northeast. There's no way to immunize yourself but you can take steps to protect yourself from bites. It starts with recognizing that this is a problem that's worthy of your time and attention. This is one concern in life that's preventable by following a few simple guidelines:

- **Cover up, even when it's hot out**
If you're going for a walk in the woods, or working in the garden wear long pants, long sleeves, shoes and socks, and tuck your pants into your socks to avoid any exposed skin around the ankles. Wear a hat and a bandanna around your neck to cover up even more skin; if you have long hair, pull it back into a ponytail or braids.
- **Avoid high risk areas**
Ticks don't fly or jump, they attach themselves to humans who brush against tall grasses or bushes. They can also be picked up by a dog then later crawl onto a person. Stay in the center of a trail when walking in the woods and avoid sitting on downed logs, where ticks like to nestle.

- **Use insect repellent on exposed skin**

The most common insect repellants contain DEET. Other repellents such as picaridin, IR3535 or lemon eucalyptus oil can be used on the skin, however their equivalence to DEET for repelling ticks has not been as well evaluated. DEET is available in many products, in concentrations ranging from less than 10 percent to more than 75 percent. Products with concentrations around 10 percent are effective for periods of approximately two hours; a concentration of about 25 percent provides an average of five hours of protection. Protection is shortened by swimming, washing, rainfall, sweating, and wiping. According to the EPA, the human health risk assessment concluded that there are no risks of concern because no toxic effects have been identified when DEET is applied to skin. Adults should apply DEET to children avoiding their hands, or near their eyes and mouths. If you're also using sunscreen, apply the sunscreen first, and then the mosquito repellent afterward.

- **Permethrin treated clothing**
Permethrin is an insecticide that can be applied to clothing to prevent tick bites but should ***not be applied directly to skin***. Consider purchasing clothing that has been pre-treated with permethrin.



- **Tick Check!**

Probably the most important step. After gardening, hiking or other outdoor activity, remove the clothing you wore and do a full body check for ticks. Look in a mirror, and check hidden spots: behind the knees, the waist area and the bellybutton. That's where they like to hide. Also feel for ticks on your scalp and behind your ears as you might not be able to see them there.



- **What about clothing?**

There's one sure-fire way to kill any ticks that might have hitched a ride on your clothing. Throw any potential tick-bearing clothes in the dryer and run it on high heat for 10 minutes. It's not the heat that kills them, it's the dryness. Ticks require moisture to survive and can actually survive a hot-water run through the washing machine.

- **Safe removal**

If you do discover a tick that's attached, follow these simple guidelines to remove it safely. There are many inexpensive tick removers available on the internet. If you don't have a device handy you can use tweezers to do the job. Remember to grasp the tick close to the skin and pull gently, slowly away from the skin. If you are not able to remove the entire tick don't try to dig it out, just wipe the area with alcohol. If you cannot remove the tick yourself or are concerned that the tick has been attached for more than a day, seek medical advice. The Clinic keeps tick removal devices and can assist you with removal and medical advice.



Health Education Lecture

Dr. Maureen O'Connor is Assistant Professor of Neurology at Boston University, Director of Neuropsychology at the Bedford Veterans Affairs Hospital and the author of a recent book *Seven Steps to Managing Your Memory*.

Please join us for some real life examples on how to successfully manage age-related memory loss.

Wednesday, June 13, 2018
10:30 am – 11:30 am

Bottoms up!

Summer celebrations often include alcoholic beverages. If you're celebrating with a cocktail, beer or glass of wine this summer be sure to drink plenty of other fluids. Both alcohol and caffeine have diuretic effects that can lead to dehydration. Older adults are more susceptible to dehydration because the sensation of thirst diminishes with age. The risk is even greater for anyone taking diuretics such as Lasix (furosemide) or hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ). The minimum recommendation of fluid per day is six 8 ounce glasses. Fruits and vegetables can also be a good source of water. Stay hydrated!

