

Tick-talk

Tick season is here now that temperatures are consistently above freezing. This summer is predicted to be a bad one due to the lack of snow this winter and spring. Minnesota hosts about a dozen different species of ticks, including the deer tick, wood tick, and lone star tick. They are often found in humid, wooded, long grassy habitats where they prey on mice, deer and other mammals.

The deer tick is the most notorious, where 1 in 3 adult ticks carry the bacteria that causes Lyme's disease. An infected tick must be attached to you for 24-48 hours to transmit Lyme's disease, however other diseases like anaplasmosis may take less time. The dog tick is known for carrying the diseases Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia.

The lone star tick is a rare one to find in Minnesota but carries some ugly diseases. It is a brown color with a single white dot on its back. This tick can transmit diseases like ehrlichiosis, Tularemia, Heartland and Bourbon virus disease, and Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI). When the tick bites a person, it can also transmit a sugar molecule (alpha-gal) which causes a person to have an immune response that may cause a mild to severe allergic reaction to ingesting red meat.

A tick bite does not automatically transfer diseases to the host. However, some diseases can take as little as 3-6 hours to transfer. It is important to take steps to avoid being bit in the first place. One way is to tuck your pants into your socks and your shirt into your pants while out in the woods. This won't allow the ticks to get under your clothing, and they will be easier to find on your clothes. Another step to avoid a tick bite is to treat your clothing with permethrin, which will repel and kill ticks.

If you find a tick attached to you, take a picture for later identification and try removing it with a pair of tweezers or a special tick remover tool. Don't use your fingers, as it is important to remove the mouth parts, and you could squeeze the possibly infected tick fluids into your body. Once it is removed, disinfect the bite site with soap and water, alcohol, or an antiseptic wipe. Put the tick in a plastic bag and call your doctor. Antibiotics to prevent Lyme's disease must be given within 72 hours of removing a tick.



Blacklegged Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)



Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)



Dog Tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*)

