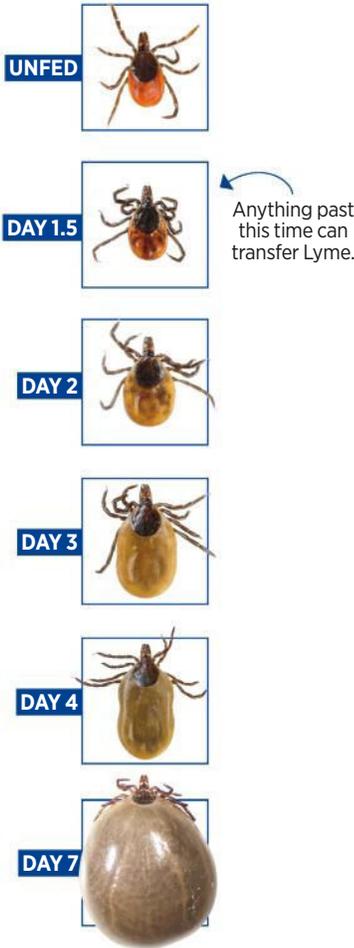


GROWING PAINS

Even if you find a tick on your skin, don't panic. It usually takes about 36 hours for it to adhere, feed, and transfer the bacteria that causes Lyme. Meaning: If you remove it during that period, it likely hasn't had a chance to spread the bacteria. Check to see if it's a nymph or female by looking at the nonengorged scutum—the ticks that transmit Lyme have a solid black-brown shield—then compare it to this (magnified) timeline.



ONCE BITTEN

You think you have a deer tick on your bod. Gah! Here's how to get that sucker off safely and what to do next.

1 / REMOVE

Using fine-tipped tweezers, grab the tick as close as you can to where it's attached to your skin and pull directly upward with even pressure. Twisting or jerking can cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. (If any mouthparts are left behind, leave them alone; they're icky but harmless, and like a splinter, they'll work their way out on their own.) Disinfect the bite and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

2 / CHECK

If you find one tick, you may have more, so do a full-body exam. Use a handheld or full-length mirror, paying attention to the back of your knees, scalp, armpits, and even between your butt cheeks and genitals.

3 / OPTIONAL: CONFIRM

Take a picture and upload it to the University of Rhode Island's TickSpotters.org, especially if

it looks like the tick had time to feed (see "Growing Pains," left). In about 24 hours, their pros will reply (at no cost), identifying your tick, and based on your location, assess the riskiness of your bite. For extra assurance, attach the tick to an index card with clear tape, or submerge it in rubbing alcohol to kill it, then place into a sealed plastic baggie. Mail it to TickReport, a nonprofit organization at UMass Amherst (tickreport.org for details). For about \$50, they'll test your tick and e-mail you a report within three business days about any bacteria and viruses it's carrying. If either test suggests Lyme, get to your doctor ASAP.

4 / MONITOR

Rash or flu-like symptoms—low-grade fever, aches, chills, and fatigue—can occur up to a month after being bitten. If you feel them, hightail it to your doc, even if you just know you may have been exposed but don't remember being bitten (70 percent of people with Lyme don't). An M.D. can do a visual exam or blood test to check for the disease. It can take a few weeks for the illness to show up in your blood, so if you test negative and still feel sick, consider retesting or a second opinion.

You Got Lyme. Now What?

Most people recover with a course of antibiotics (the sooner you take them, the better). But up to 20 percent of patients have lingering issues like fatigue and muscle and joint pain that can last for six months or longer, a condition called post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome (PTLDS). Experts aren't sure what causes PTLDS, but if you have been treated and still feel unwell, see your M.D., who can prescribe meds and behavioral therapies to help you cope.

SPOT THE RASH

About 80 percent of people with Lyme will develop a rash within two weeks of being bitten. Most of us associate Lyme with a bull's-eye rash, but only 20 percent of patients get it; the rest can develop any of the ones below, which are often warm but not itchy, says John Aucott, M.D., director of the Lyme Disease Clinical Research Center at Johns Hopkins University. If you notice *any* rash within a month of being in a tick-heavy area, see a doctor.



The classic target or bull's-eye



Circular with a red outline, and slowly expanding



Solid red oval



Scattered red patches with dusky centers



Bluish-purple, like a bruise, but with a uniform border



Red and growing with a crusty center

NON-LYME SUCKERS

These four tick types are also on the rise and can spread other illnesses, some in as little as 24 hours after latching on to skin. If you get bitten by one of these bugs or show any of the signs below in the month after you could have been exposed, see a doctor. Here, visuals of the stages most likely to infect.



AMERICAN DOG TICK

Found: East of the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific Coast

Spreads:

► Tularemia, a disease that causes a weeping skin ulcer near the bite site; fever; and swelling in the lymph nodes. If you don't take antibiotics to treat it, the infection can cause life-threatening breathing problems.

► Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a rare infection that can cause sudden fever and headache and, two to five days later, a rash of small, flat, pink, nonitchy spots that typically start at the wrists, forearms, and ankles—regardless of where you were bitten—then spread to the torso and sometimes the palms and soles of the feet. Unless treated with antibiotics, it can cause deadly bleeding and neurological disorders.

Need to know: Nymphs and adult females (ID the latter by the large off-white shield over a brown body) are most likely to bite humans.



BROWN DOG TICK

Found: Everywhere in the U.S.; outbreaks have occurred in Arizona, as well as Southern Colorado and New Mexico

Spreads: Rocky Mountain spotted fever

Need to know: These ticks predominantly feed on dogs, which is why you're most at risk if you have dogs nearby. All stages can spread bacteria. Females have a brown and black pattern on their body; the marking on males is similar but darker.



LONE STAR TICK

Found: In the East and Southeast—along the East Coast, below the Great Lakes and west to Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas

Spreads:

► Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI),

which can cause a typically circular rash, as well as headache, fever, and fatigue. STARI isn't fatal, but its symptoms so resemble Lyme that you'll likely be given an antibiotic, just in case.

► Tularemia

Need to know: Nymphs and adults can spread disease. The former are all brown. Adult females have a single white dot in the center of their brown body; males have spots or streaks of white around the outer edge of the body.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WOOD TICK

Found: In the Rocky Mountains and southwestern

Canada, from elevations of 4,000 to 10,500 feet

Spreads:

► Colorado tick fever (CTF), which causes fever and flu-like symptoms within two weeks after a bite. Because it's a virus, antibiotics won't help; you may need a hospital stay for IV fluids and pain and fever meds.

► Rocky Mountain spotted fever

► Tularemia

Need to know: Adults are most dangerous. The saliva from females (they're reddish-brown with a gray semicircle pattern that males lack) contains a neurotoxin that can cause temporary paralysis (it disappears when the tick is removed).

Sources: TickEncounter and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Tips for Tick-Proofing

What to wear, spray, and do to stop them in their tracks



Shoes/Boots

Ideally, in tick-prone areas, you want to wear boots so you can tuck your pants into them to keep ticks from climbing up your legs. Spray them, or whatever shoes you're wearing, with 0.5 percent permethrin insecticide (try Sawyer Permethrin Premium Clothing Insect Repellent, \$15, amazon.com) once a month from May through August. Apply it outdoors and let dry; breathing in the fumes can cause dizziness and headaches.



Clothes

Spritz your outfit with the same permethrin spray, or wear repellent-treated duds (try rei.com or llbean.com). Or send your outdoor clothes to Insect Shield; for \$10 an item, the company will treat them to last 70 washes and mail them back (insectshield.com). Launder treated clothes separately; a small amount of permethrin can come off in the wash—and you don't want it on, say, your underwear, where it could irritate sensitive skin.



Skin Spray

Use a 20 to 30 percent DEET repellent on exposed skin before heading outdoors; recent studies suggest it's safe, even for pregnant women and kids. It will keep the creepers at bay by masking your scent but won't kill them. Reapply after sweating or swimming. Look for one with an EPA registration number, which means the company has provided the EPA with info on the repellent's effectiveness against ticks.



Heat

Don't just chuck dirty clothes in the hamper to clean later; live ticks can linger on them, then latch on to the next person who touches them. Instead, immediately wash your gear in hot water (cold or warm won't kill ticks), then tumble-dry on low heat for 90 minutes or high heat for 60. Items that don't need a wash (e.g., jackets) should be tossed into the dryer on high for 10 minutes to fatally crisp any hangers-on. ■