

Sassafras Earth Education

Tick Policy 2024

For All Parents, Caregivers, Teens, and Staff

Prevention:

The best prevention of tick-borne diseases is **timely tick removal**. Finding and removing all ticks takes time, scrutiny, and consistency!

1. **Protective Clothing:**
 - Wear long pants and tuck clothing in (pants into socks, T-shirt into pants).
 - Wear a hat or bandana and tie up or braid long hair.
 - Upon returning home, leave “woody” clothes outside your home to wash or put in a hot dryer immediately (20 minutes).
2. **Repellent:**
 - Repellent is helpful but not a guarantee against all ticks.
 - Apply tick repellent before coming to camp.
 - Natural repellent can be reapplied by midday.
3. **Tick Checks:**
 - A must for everyone spending time outside.
 - See our recommended tick-check routine below.
4. **Timely Action:**
 - The sooner you remove a tick the better. Ideally, remove a tick before it bites.

During Programs:

- **Intermittent Tick Checks:**
 - Conducted during program hours within our groups, pairing up participants to check each other’s clothing, shoes, and hairline.
 - At the end of each day, staff will remind participants to do a full-body tick check at home with a trusted parent or with a mirror, including private areas.
- **Overnights:**
 - Participants pair up and check with a buddy. In summer, we check in bathing suits, and participants are asked to check areas hidden from view thoroughly with a mirror.

Tick Removal:

- If your child has a tick that is attached during program hours, staff will remove the tick and sterilize the bite area.
- Parents are notified by the end of the program day if a tick is removed from a participant.

- If a tick is found attached towards the end of the program day, staff will ask the parents to remove it.

Back at Home:

- Everyone needs to do a full-body tick check at home.
- For more information about ticks and tick-borne illnesses, visit the M.V. Board of Health website: [Martha's Vineyard Board of Health Tick-borne Illness Information](#).

Tick-Check Routine:

1. **Intermittent Tick-Checks & Tick Spotting:**
 - While outdoors, periodically check yourself and others for ticks on clothing, shoes, exposed skin, and hair.
2. **Full Body Tick Check:**
 - Perform a full-body tick check at least once, preferably twice every 24 hours.
 - Check as soon as possible after exposure, including all areas mentioned below.
3. **“Skinspection”:**
 - A thorough and detailed inspection of every piece of skin is called for.
 - Use glasses or a magnifying glass as ticks can be extremely small (the size of a point).
 - Scan and examine small dots and spots, especially in dark places, creases, skin folds, between fingers and toes, in bellybuttons, under underwear/bras, private areas, behind ears, in ears, and along the neck and hairline.
4. **“Look before you itch”:**
 - Develop the habit of looking before itching to avoid scratching the tick off.
 - Instead, remove ticks with tweezers.
5. **Removal:**
 - Remove ticks while alive; do not suffocate, burn, or kill ticks with Vaseline, a lighter, or similar methods.
 - Grab the tick with pointed tweezers as close to the skin as possible (behind the head) and pull out in the direction it went in.
 - Clean the bite area and tweezers with alcohol immediately.
6. **Bite-Areas:**
 - Monitor areas where you recently had a tick bite for healing progress and coloration.
 - A growing red rash, especially a bull’s-eye rash, indicates disease transmission, and timely action is required. See a doctor as soon as possible.
 - Note that not everyone develops a rash in the event of disease transmission.
 - Bite areas can remain red and extremely itchy for days or longer, which is normal for some people and does not indicate disease transmission.
7. **Antibiotics/Prophylaxis:**
 - If a tick has been attached for more than 24 hours, talk to your doctor.
 - Some off-island doctors may not have accurate information on tick-borne diseases.

- If you have symptoms, antibiotics may be prescribed, to be used for a minimum of 21 days.
- Children 10 years and up, and adults can take a prophylactic dose within 72 hours of contracting a tick. A prophylactic dose consists of a one-time 200mg dose of Doxycycline, which should not be taken on an empty stomach.