



## Tick Information

### What are ticks?

Ticks are small, insect-like creatures most often found in naturally vegetated areas that feed by attaching to animals and humans, biting to feed on blood. There are many different kinds of ticks in California, but only six kinds are known to commonly bite humans. Sometimes these ticks carry germs like bacteria or viruses that can be transmitted to a person while the tick is attached.

**Avoiding tick bites is the best way to avoid getting diseases such as Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and other tickborne infections.**

### Where are ticks found?

Ticks are found in natural areas that have grasses, shrubs, or leaf litter under trees. They are most attracted to dogs for feeding, but will also bite people.

### Reduce Ticks in the Yard

- Remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- Mow the lawn frequently.
- Remove old furniture, mattresses, or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.
- If you do find ticks in your yard or, on you or your pets after being outside, your yard should be treated to reduce or eliminate the ticks.
- Pesticides are available at hardware and home improvement stores for treatment of outdoor areas. It is very important to always follow product application instructions. Licensed pest control operators also have the appropriate products to treat areas for ticks and other pests safely.

### Prevention:

While it is a good idea to use preventive measures year-round, individuals should be extra careful in the warmer months (April-September) when ticks are most active.

- If you are going to be in a tick-infested area, use repellents that contain 20 to 30% DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.
- Persons exposed to tick-infested habitats should do a careful inspection and remove crawling or attached ticks. Light-colored clothing allows you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing. Tuck your pants legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pants legs.
- Conduct a body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas by searching your entire body for ticks. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find on your body.
- Check children for ticks, especially in the hair, when returning from potentially tick-infested areas. Ticks may be carried into the household on clothing and pets and only attach later, so both should be examined carefully to exclude ticks.

### Preventing Ticks on Your Pet:

Dogs are very susceptible to tick bites and tickborne diseases. It's important to use a tick preventive product on your dog because vaccines are not available for all the tickborne diseases that can affect your pet. A variety of products are available such as shampoos and drops that can be applied on the dog's skin to protect your pet. To reduce the chances that a tick will transmit disease to you or your pets:

- Check your pets for ticks often, especially after they spend time outdoors.
- If you find a tick on your dog, remove it right away.
- Ask your veterinarian to conduct a tick check at each exam.
- Reduce tick habitat in your yard.
- For additional information on tick prevention and tick repellents for your dog contact your veterinarian.



**Remember, diseases like Rocky Mountain spotted fever are caused by ticks, not by dogs. If your dog has ticks and becomes ill, it is the ticks that have caused the disease and your dog cannot spread the disease to you.**

### If you are bitten by a tick:

Promptly remove the tick. If you develop any symptoms 1-30 days after a bite, consult with your physician. Let your physician know that you were bitten by a tick.

### Rocky Mountain spotted fever (*Rickettsia rickettsii*):

Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) is caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii* and is a cause of potentially fatal human illness in North and South America. Many types of ticks can spread disease to people as well as animals, that's why it's important to let your doctor / veterinarian know if you or your dog have been bitten.

In the American southwest, RMSF cases have recently been identified in an area where the disease had not been previously seen. The brown dog tick, is found on dogs and around people's homes. Almost all of the cases occurred within communities with a large number of free-roaming dogs.

### Symptoms and Treatment

Symptoms of RMSF include a fever, headache, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and lack of appetite. A rash often appears on extremities on the wrists, forearms, palms or soles of the feet. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is best treated by using a tetracycline antibiotic, usually doxycycline. Because laboratory confirmation is generally not available during acute illness, treatment is initiated based on symptoms and it is very important to let your physician know that you were bitten by a tick.

### Additional Information:

California Department of Public Health:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HEALTHINFO/DISCOND/Pages/TickBorneDiseases.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/>