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Health Department of Northwest Michigan

Tips and Tricks

The best defense is offense when it comes to ticks

Heading outdoors to enjoy the warm weather includes sharing it with critters who make grass, weeds, and trees home—including ticks. Outdoor adventures increase the chances of human-tick contact.

Preventing tick bites is the best way to protect yourself against the diseases they may carry. Several kinds of ticks can carry dangerous bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Not all tick bites will make you sick, but tickborne diseases do occur in Michigan and include Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and Babesiosis. Last year, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) reported three suspected or confirmed cases of Lyme Disease in the four-county area.

Know the Facts

Tick exposure can occur year-round, but ticks are most active during the warmer months (April-September). Tick bites are commonly associated with adult ticks, but the larvae and nymphs also bite and are difficult to spot because they are smaller than a sesame seed – one reason that Lyme disease cases peak in the early summer months. Take offensive action to prevent tick bites when planning to spend time in wooded or grassy environments, and even in your own yard.

“I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the outdoors, but whenever possible stay on established trails, avoid thick brush and other areas that are likely to harbor ticks, and take precautions to reduce risk from tick bites both before and after your time in the woods,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, HDNW Medical Director.

These precautionary measures will help protect you and your loved ones against ticks and the diseases they may carry:

- Use repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin. Protection lasts for several hours, and it can be used with children over two months of age. Care should be taken to avoid eyes and mouth.
- Wear clothing that has been treated with permethrin.
- Remove ticks from your clothes and pets before going back indoors.
- Look for ticks on your body, especially the scalp, ears, armpits, belly button, waist, and groin.
- Put your clothes in the dryer on high heat for 60 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.
- Take a shower as soon as you can after coming indoors.
- If you find an imbedded tick, immediately remove it as it typically requires 36 to 48 hours to transmit Lyme disease. Use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible and pull upward.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

Questions may be directed to HDNW's central intake team at 800-432-4121. Additional information on ticks and Lyme disease can be found here:

- [Preventing tick-borne illness in Michigan](#)
- [Ticks and Your Health](#)
- [MDHHS - Ticks](#)
- [CDC - Ticks](#)

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Michigan's Five Most Common Ticks

Ticks are significant carriers of pathogens that cause human and animal disease. Listed here is a ranked order of the ticks most likely to bite humans in Michigan.



1. American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*)

Distribution: Widespread throughout Michigan forests and grassy areas

Key Facts: These ticks are active from early May–November, and will bite both humans and companion animals.

Diseases: Diseases associated with the American dog tick are rare in Michigan, but may include [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#) and [tularemia](#).

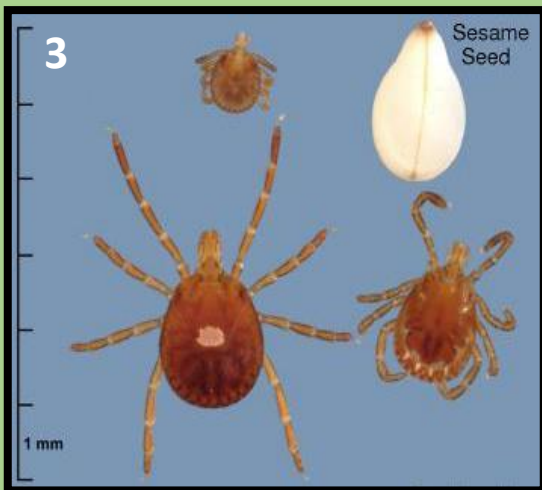
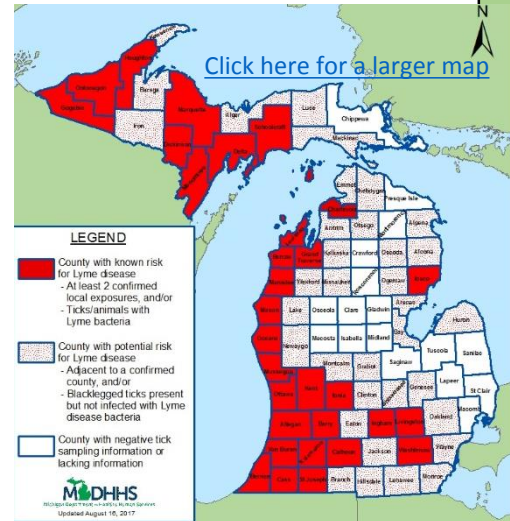


2. Blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)

Distribution: Emerging in Michigan, see map at right

Key Facts: Found on low forest vegetation, often along human and animal trails.

Diseases: [Lyme disease](#) is the most common tick-borne disease in Michigan. Other rare diseases include: [anaplasmosis](#), [babesiosis](#), [deer-tick virus](#), and [ehrlichiosis](#).



3. Lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)

Distribution: Occasionally found in wooded and grassy areas across the state

Key Facts: An aggressive biter of humans and companion animals, adult females have distinctive “Lone Star” mark

Diseases: [Ehrlichiosis](#), [rocky mountain spotted fever](#), [tularemia](#)



4. Woodchuck tick (*Ixodes cookei*)

Distribution: Found most commonly on pets throughout Michigan

Key Facts: Usually found near dens of skunks and woodchucks, will bite companion animals near animal dens and occasionally humans

Diseases: [Powassan encephalitis](#)



5. Brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*)

Distribution: Occasionally found in Michigan.

Key Facts: can uniquely survive and breed in indoor environments, has been associated with kennel, shelter, and breeding facilities. Good hygiene practices can prevent indoor infestations.

Diseases: [Rocky mountain spotted fever](#), [canine babesiosis](#), [canine ehrlichiosis](#)

Tick Bite and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention

- Use insect repellents containing no more than 30 percent DEET.
- Use repellents that contain permethrin on clothing.
- After spending time outdoors, check your skin and clothes for ticks.
- See your healthcare provider if you have symptoms of fever, rash, body aches or fatigue.