

How to Do a Tick Check

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It's that time of year to add a new routine to your daily hygiene — tick checks for you and your family. Just like brushing your teeth, you should be checking for ticks daily. If you have young children, check them daily for ticks, too.

Here's how to do a tick check:

1. Check your clothing. Start by carefully examining your clothing. Wearing light-colored clothes and tucking your pant legs into your socks when you're walking in the woods will help you find dark-colored ticks more easily.

2. Search your nooks and crannies.

Ticks like the dark, warm places on a person, so check those spots regularly. Important places to look include: behind your ears, your hairline and hair, armpits, groin, between your toes, and behind your knees.

3. Pay attention to constriction zones.

Make sure to check your waistline, collars, and other areas where your clothing creates a constriction.

4. If you find a tick, identify its species. Deer ticks, also known as blacklegged ticks, can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease. When you find a tick attached to yourself or a family member, it's important to find out if it's a deer tick or the less harmful American dog tick. Thankfully, telling these two ticks apart is not difficult. Using a magnifier, take a close look at the tick's size and coloring. The **American dog tick** is about one-eighth of an inch long and is brown and tan, with a speckled pattern on its back. The **blacklegged tick** is two-toned, with a chestnut-brown head and legs and an orange-red rear. Adult blacklegged ticks are one-sixteenth of an inch in length (smaller than dog ticks) but can swell to three-eighths of an inch if they've been attached for a while.

5. Remove ticks safely. When you find a tick, remove it carefully using tweezers. Grasp the head of the tick, and pull it out in its entirety. Place the tick on a piece of tape and fold over the tape, trapping the tick inside. In cases where the tick is not attached, simply swipe the tick off with a piece of tape and fold over. If it's a blacklegged tick, contact your doctor.

