



News Release

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Tick season is here and the state Department of Health is collecting them

Help us identify ticks from around the state

OLYMPIA — Tick season is in full swing in western Washington, and it's kicking into gear in the eastern side of the state. The Department of Health invites people all over the state to [send ticks to the agency](#) for a project to learn more about what types of ticks live in Washington.

“Different types of ticks carry different diseases,” explains Liz Dykstra, public health entomologist for the Department of Health. “We’re asking people to help us learn more by sending us ticks for identification so we understand the risks for disease in different areas.”

Washington has relatively few cases of tick-borne disease, yet each year a few cases of relapsing fever, Lyme disease, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever are reported to state health officials.

Try to avoid tick bites. When working, camping, or walking in a tick habitat — wooded, brushy, or grassy places — a few simple precautions can reduce your chance of being bitten. Wear long pants and a long-sleeved shirt; tuck your pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants to help keep ticks outside your clothing so they’re more easily spotted and removed. It also helps to wear light colored, tightly woven clothing, which will allow the dark tick to be seen more easily; the tight weave makes it harder for the tick to reach your skin and become attached. Use tick repellent when necessary, and carefully follow the instructions. Products containing DEET or permethrin are very effective. Take special care when using repellents on children.

When you’re out of tick country, check yourself, your children, and pets thoroughly for ticks. Closely inspect around the head, neck, ears, under arms, between legs, and back of knees. Look for what may appear like a new freckle or speck of dirt. Shower or bathe (preferably within two hours after being in tick habitat) to wash off and more easily find ticks that are crawling on you.

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If you discover an attached tick, it's important to remove it quickly. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Avoid removing the tick with bare hands. Don't twist or jerk the tick, which may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the parts with tweezers if possible. After removing the tick, disinfect the area and wash your hands. Note the date that you found the tick attached to you, in case you get sick. If you develop a fever, rash, or aches and pains within a month, let your health care provider know that you were bitten by a tick. This information may help your provider diagnose your illness.

Dogs are also at risk for tick-borne diseases and are often the first in a group to pick up a tick. When checking your dog for ticks, closely examine the same areas you would on yourself as well as between its toes. Run your fingers through its fur to help detect any bumps that might be a tick. You can add protection for your dog or cat by using a product to prevent ticks. Ask a veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets and your environment from ticks.

Information about [sending ticks](#) to the Department of Health and on [preventing tick bites](#) is on our [tick webpage](#) or [contact us by e-mail](#) or phone, 1-877-485-7316.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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