

How to prevent tick bites this fall

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As the weather cools down around the country, more people are taking the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities. Whether it's camping, hiking or hunting, an infectious diseases expert at Baylor College of Medicine gives tips on how to prevent tick bites this fall.

"There are a lot of things you can do preventatively both before and after you engage in [outdoor activities](#)," said Dr. Jill Weatherhead, assistant professor of pediatrics—[tropical medicine](#) and [infectious diseases](#) at Baylor. "Having these precautions ready and in place will help mitigate contact with vectors like [ticks](#) and reduce the risk of getting diseases associated with these types of bites."

Different types of ticks live in different areas around the country and they transmit different diseases. However, the precautions are the same no matter where you go. Ticks are more common in wooded areas that are grassier and have a lot of leaf debris on the ground.

Before heading outdoors, Weatherhead suggests wearing clothing that covers your body and does not leave skin exposed. Clothing can be pretreated with permethrin to repel ticks, and insect repellants with DEET also can be helpful.

When you are outdoors, make sure you're staying on the path or trail and avoid heavily [wooded areas](#).

After spending time outdoors, it's important to check your body, your clothing, your gear and your pets for ticks. Be sure to check in places you may not think about, like your underarms, along your waistband and along your hairline. If you are bitten by a tick, you will not immediately have symptoms, so it's important to do a body check.

If you find a tick, remove it as soon as possible.

"The longer they're on your body feeding, the more likely they are to transmit infectious pathogens," Weatherhead said.

Monitor for symptoms and alert your health care provider if you develop symptoms like a rash or fever, which may be associated with a tick-

borne illness.

Different ticks can transmit different types of infectious diseases, which can all have significant acute and chronic long-term effects depending on the degree of infection.

"There really can be consequences from transmission of [infectious pathogens](#) that are living inside the ticks," Weatherhead said.

Treatment for infectious diseases from [tick bites](#) can vary depending on the type of infection, so talk to your health care provider.

Weatherhead said there is no need to panic. You should go outside and explore, but equip yourself with the right information to help prevent exposure to ticks.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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