

Tips to keep ticks under control this summer

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Summertime brings an abundance of good things—sunshine, warm weather, backyard cookouts and fire pits—but, like it or not, summertime also brings out some pesky creatures that could put a damper on your plans and health.

Tick species capable of transmitting diseases affecting humans are present in Kentucky. These diseases transmitted can vary by the specific tick and region within the Commonwealth, which means it's important to practice adequate prevention methods to avoid infection.

According to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, ehrlichiosis, southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI), Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme [disease](#) are all possible to contract in the state.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people can contract Ehrlichiosis through the bite of infected ticks, including the [lone star tick](#) and the blacklegged tick. People with this disease will experience fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and sometimes upset stomach.

A rash accompanied by fatigue, fever, headache, muscle and joint pains can be associated with the illness known as STARI. While the cause of STARI is not known, those who contract it will notice a red, expanding "bull's-eye" lesion that develops around the site of a lone star tick bite.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is one of the deadliest forms of tick bites in the United States. Most people who contract the bacterial disease will have a fever, headache and rash. It can be deadly if not treated early.

Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick. According to the CDC, symptoms include [fever](#), headache, fatigue and a characteristic skin rash. If left untreated, infection can spread to the heart, joints and [nervous system](#).

Anytime you plan to engage in outdoor activities, you should do your best to prepare for and prevent potential tick exposure. Ticks live in

wooded, grassy and brushy areas. If you cannot avoid these areas, you should treat your clothing and gear with insect repellent containing DEET. Ticks can live on animals, too, so be sure to check your pets who have been spending time outside.

After you come inside, check your clothes for ticks and take a shower. The CDC recommends using a hand-held or full-length mirror to check your entire body for ticks. Don't forget to check your kids, too, especially under the arms, around the ears, inside the [belly button](#), behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and in hair.

Similar to the recommendations provided by the CDC, people known or suspected to be bitten by a tick who also have symptoms of potential tick-related diseases should seek prompt evaluation by their healthcare provider prior to deciding on a course of therapy. It is also recommended to seek evaluation from your medical provider if you cannot remove all of the tick (i.e., the head/mouth remain embedded within the skin).

Provided by University of Kentucky

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