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VDH "Bugs" & Human Health: Tick-Borne and Mosquito-Borne Diseases

Spring and summer weather brings warmer temperatures, when ticks are more active, posing a health risk for everyone who participates in more outdoor activities. The tick-borne diseases that occur most often in Virginia are Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Ehrlichiosis.

Prevention

Bites from mosquitoes and ticks can be both irritating and dangerous, as these insects serve as vectors for a number of diseases that affect humans. Luckily, there are many ways to **protect and prevent** yourself and your family against mosquito and tick bites.

Use EPA-registered Insect Repellent

- When outdoors, use insect repellent containing either DEET, picaridin, IR 3535, 2-undecanone, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on skin or clothing. Always follow instructions on the product label.
- The insect repellent "permethrin" can also be used on clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear and remain active after several washes. Be sure to apply it to clothing a few days before to allow for proper drying.
 - You may still see ticks on clothing when using permethrin, but when used properly it will kill the ticks before they bite. It's a professional's go-to product when entering tick habitat.
- **APPLICATION FOR KIDS:**
 - It is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to use products containing no greater than 30% DEET on children.
 - Do not use insect repellent on babies under 2 months old.
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol should never be used for children under 3 years of age.

Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants in light colors

- Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colors and wearing lighter colors will make it easier to spot a pesky tick on your clothing.

Tuck your pant legs into your socks for best practice tick avoidance

- Most Virginia ticks live in the forest leaf litter and shady, grassy areas. Ticks do not climb high on vegetation or fly, so they must hitch a ride by climbing up your shoes or socks. Adhering to the fashionable practice of tucking pants legs into socks will help prevent ticks from climbing up your leg under your pants, and help you spot ticks before they can reach your skin. This also ensures the ticks get an effective dose of permethrin from your clothing.

Eliminate standing water on your property that can serve as mosquito breeding sites

- Tip over and remove, or tightly cover, any containers that can hold water to prevent female mosquitoes from laying eggs.
 - Places to think about include: old tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, tarps, roof gutters and downspout screens, trash containers.
- If puddles or ditches cannot be drained or filled in, treat standing water with mosquito larvicides (dunks or granules) that can be purchased at most hardware stores.
- Other standing water issues can be directed based on their location:
 - **City or County Property** – Call your city or county government about standing water on public property.
 - **State Roads** – Call the Department of Transportation at **1-800-367-7623** about standing water along state roads.
 - **Storm Water Retention Ponds** – Call the Department of Conservation and Recreation at **804-786-1712** or visit their website www.dcr.virginia.gov

Keep mosquitoes out of the home

- Install and utilize screens on doors and windows to reduce the chance mosquitoes will enter your home. Repairing any broken screens will also help to

keep mosquitoes outside.

Check body and clothing for ticks after being outdoors

- Check clothing after spending time in tick habitats. Tumble dry clothing on high heat for 10 minutes to kill any remaining ticks.
- Use a mirror, friend, partner, or spouse to help check your body for ticks. Remember to check in armpits, in and around ears and hair, belly button, backs of knees, and between legs.
- Remember to inspect children, gear, and pets for ticks as well.

Use a tick prevention product for your dog as recommended by a veterinarian

- Be sure to check your pet for ticks after outdoor activity as they may carry unwanted pests into the home.

How to properly remove a tick:

- Follow these steps:
 - Use a tweezer to grasp the tick as close as possible to the skin.
 - Pull upward, with steady even pressure, until the tick releases to avoid breaking the mouth-parts of the tick or rupturing the tick's body.
 - After tick removal, clean the skin and bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and warm water.
 - *Save the tick in a bag or container with rubbing alcohol for identification in case an illness develops in the days after tick attachment. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

For More Information

[VDH "Bugs" & Human Health](#)

[Ticks and Tick-borne Disease of Virginia Flyer](#)

[CDC Tick Resources](#)

Article Source

Virginia Department of Health

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<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov>

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