



## Manchester-by-the-Sea Board of Health Office

### Ticks are Out in Massachusetts

The warm weather is here in Massachusetts and residents are enjoying the great outdoors. But remember, it's also tick season. Take just a few simple steps to protect yourself and your family from the illnesses that ticks can cause.

Ticks are bugs that feed on the blood of mammals, birds, or reptiles. Black-legged (deer) ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts and may spread different disease-causing germs when they bite you. The most common tick-borne diseases in Massachusetts are Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, and Anaplasmosis. Other diseases that are more rare, but still occur, are Tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, and Powassan virus. Tick-borne illnesses can be very severe and taking steps to avoid tick bites is important.

Ticks are tiny bugs most likely found in shady, damp, brushy, wooded, or grassy areas (especially in tall grass), including your own backyard. Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into **direct contact** with them.

One of the most important things you can do is check yourself for ticks once a day. Favorite places ticks like to go on your body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, and neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears. Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks after coming inside. Remove any attached ticks as soon as possible. If you find a tick attached to your skin, don't panic. Use a pair of fine point tweezers to grip the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull straight out with steady pressure. You should not apply kerosene, petroleum jelly, nail polish, or a hot match tip to remove the tick. These measures are not effective and may result in injury. Circle the calendar date and note where on the body the tick was removed. You may want to save the tick for identification. Your physician may choose to treat you following a deer tick bite. Notify your health care provider if you have been bitten by a deer tick or if you develop a rash or other signs of illness following a tick bite. Talk to your doctor if you develop a rash where you were bitten or experience symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, or sore and aching muscles.

When going outside to an area likely to have ticks, stick to main pathways and the center of trails when hiking. Wear a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt with long pants and tuck your pants into your socks. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep ticks away from your skin and make it easier to spot a tick on your clothing. Use bug repellents. Information on tick repellents is available on the State



website at: [www.mass.gov/service-details/tick-repellents](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/tick-repellents). And make sure to talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets from ticks

*This article contains information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Mass Department of Public Health. Please visit their websites for additional information:*

[www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks)

[www.mass.gov/tick-borne-diseases](http://www.mass.gov/tick-borne-diseases)