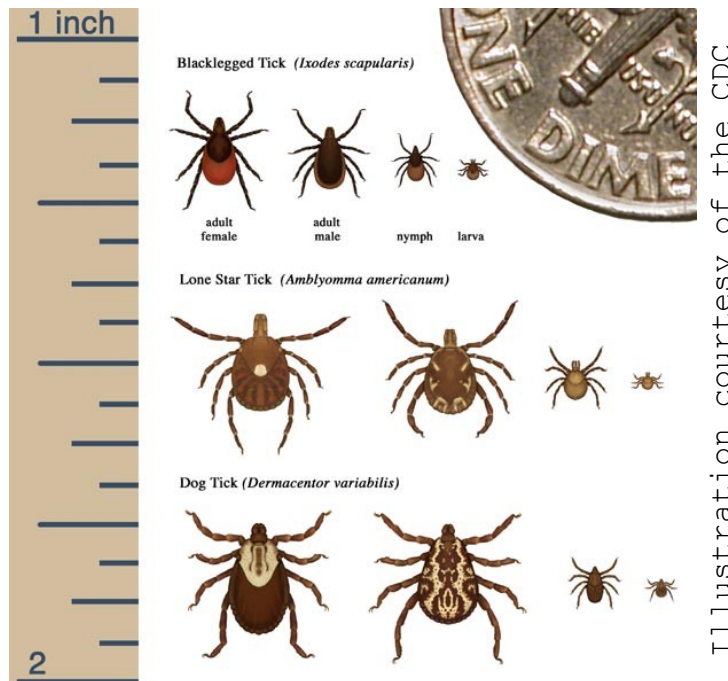


# TICKS

Ticks are obligate ectoparasite arachnids identified by four pairs of legs and no antennae. They are commonly thought of as insects, which they are not. True insects have 3 pairs of legs, and various forms of one pair of antennae. Ticks are efficient blood feeders on warm-blooded animals, as well as vectors of disease. In each stage, they require a single blood meal to molt and develop to the next stage of life. Larvae typically feed on the blood of mice or birds. Nymphs and adult blacklegged ticks feed on larger hosts, including raccoons, deer, people, and pets. Immature blacklegged ticks may also attach to humans, but go unnoticed due to their tiny size. Ticks take several days to complete feeding. Adults are most active from April to July where they are found amongst bushes, shrubs and tall grasses waiting to attach to a host.

There are 15 species of ticks found in Illinois, however only 5 are commonly encountered by humans; these include the American Dog Tick, the Lone Star Tick, the Blacklegged Tick (also known as the Deer Tick), Brown Tick, and the Winter Tick.



## Tick Diseases

- The American Dog Tick, found throughout Illinois, can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, and possibly ehrlichiosis to humans.
- The Lone Star Tick, found primarily in southern Illinois can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia and ehrlichiosis.
- The Blacklegged Tick is the primary vector of Lyme disease in northern Illinois, and may transmit ehrlichiosis as well to humans.
- The Brown Tick which is commonly found across the United States is not known to be a vector of any disease.
- The Winter Tick feeds on large mammals, and is not known to vector a disease to humans.

## **Control ticks around your home - Reduce Ticks in Your Yard**

**Modify your landscape to create Tick-Safe Zones.** To do this, keep play areas and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation. Also, regularly remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes, and place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks away from recreational areas.

**Provide a vegetation-free play area.** Keep play areas and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation.

**Use a chemical control agent.** Effective tick control chemicals are available for use by the homeowner, or they can be applied by a professional pest control expert, and even limited applications can greatly reduce the number of ticks. A single springtime application of acaricide can reduce the population of ticks that cause Lyme disease by 68–100%.

**Discourage deer.** Removing plants that attract deer and constructing physical barriers may help discourage deer from entering your yard and bringing ticks with them.

### **Apply pesticides to control ticks**

A pesticide designed to kill ticks is sometimes called an acaricide. Acaricides can be very effective in reducing tick populations. If properly timed, a single application at the end of May or beginning of June can reduce tick populations by 68-100%.

The Environmental Protection Agency and your state determine the availability of pesticides. Check with local health officials about the best time to apply acaricide in your area, as well as any rules and regulations related to pesticide application on residential properties. Or contact a professional pesticide company to apply pesticides at your home.

### **Create a tick-safe zone**

Use landscaping techniques to create a tick-safe zone around homes, parks and recreational areas. Ticks that transmit Lyme disease thrive in humid wooded areas. They die quickly in sunny and dry environments. Here are some simple landscaping techniques to help reduce tick populations:

- Remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edges of lawns.
- Place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to restrict tick migration to recreational areas.
- Mow the lawn and clear brush and leaf litter frequently.
- Keep the ground under bird feeders clean.
- Stack wood neatly and in dry areas.
- Keep playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees.

## Establishing a tick-free zone in your yard

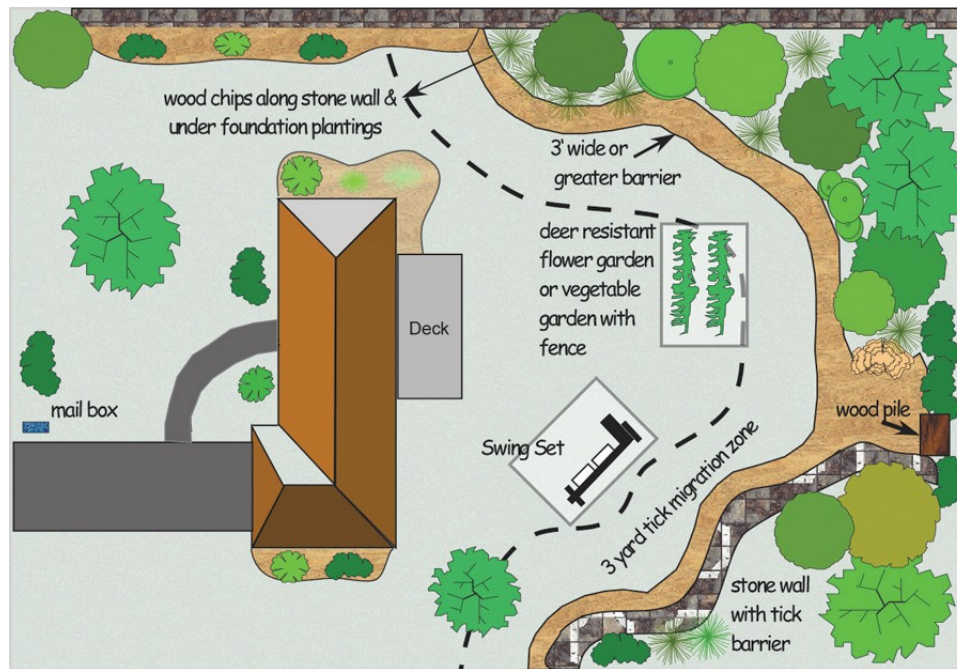


Illustration courtesy of the CDC

### Tips on how to avoid being bitten by a tick

- Avoid wooded areas or areas with tall grass and weeds. If you are in these areas, stay on the paths. Ticks have been found in Winnebago County and each year about a dozen test positive for Lyme disease.
- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Tuck trouser cuffs in socks.
- Apply insect repellent containing 10% to 30% DEET primarily to clothes. Apply sparingly to exposed skin (except on the face). Be sure to wash treated skin after coming indoors. Use repellents containing permethrin to treat clothes (especially pants, socks and shoes)—but not skin. Always follow label directions; do not misuse or overuse insect repellents. Always supervise children in the use of insect repellents.
- Walk in the center of trails so weeds do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children and other family members every two to three hours for ticks. Most ticks seldom attach quickly and rarely transmit a tickborne disease until they have been attached for four or more hours. If your pets spend time outdoors, regularly check them for ticks, too.
- Make sure the property around your home is unattractive to ticks. Keep your grass mowed and weeds cut.

## **What to do to if you find a tick on yourself or a family member**

- On humans, ticks are usually found around the hairline, the area behind the ears, or in the armpits. It takes five to six hours for a tick to become firmly attached and up to ten days for it to become fully engorged with blood. Remove any tick promptly. Do not burn the tick with a match or cover it with petroleum jelly.
- The best way to remove a tick is to grasp it with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pull it straight out. Do not twist or jerk the tick. If tweezers are not available, grasp the tick with a piece of tissue or cloth or whatever can be used as a barrier between your fingers and the tick. Do not use bare hands. If the mouthparts break off, do not become alarmed; once the mouthparts are removed from the rest of the tick, the tick can no longer transmit the Lyme disease bacteria.
- If you want to have a tick identified, put it in a small vial of rubbing alcohol and contact the Winnebago County Health Department for assistance.
- Wash the bite area and your hands thoroughly with soap and water, and apply an antiseptic to the bite site.

## **What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?**

Signs and symptoms can vary greatly from one person to another. Symptoms also vary with the length of time a person has been infected.

- A ring-like red rash occurs in about 70 - 80% of cases and begins three days to 32 days after the bite of an infected tick. The red rash at the bite site is circular and grows larger over a few days or a few weeks. In the center, the rash usually clears and has been described as resembling a bull's-eye. Generally, the rash is not painful.
- Often this rash is accompanied by one or more nonspecific symptoms: fatigue, chills and fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, and joint and muscle pain.
- An allergic reaction to tick saliva can often occur at the site of the tick bite. Such allergic reactions, which are not a sign of Lyme disease, usually occur within 72 hours after the tick bite, usually do not expand beyond 2 inches in diameter like the Lyme rash and disappear within a few days.

For more information, contact the Winnebago County Health Department at 815-720-4000, or log onto [www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org). For more information about ticks please see the following websites:

**CDC ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))**

<http://wwwtest.cdc.gov/Features/StopTicks/>

**Illinois Department of Public Health ([www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us))**

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pccommonticks.htm>

[http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tick\\_dist.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tick_dist.htm)

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tickkey.htm>