

TICK TALK (NOT AN APP)

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I will admit it: I have been terrified of ticks since I was a child. But there is good reason to be leery: ticks transmit some very nasty diseases. June is peak month for tick-borne disease in Indiana.

Types of Ticks and Associated Diseases

According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IN DNR), there are many species of ticks in Indiana, the most common being:

Black-legged (Deer) Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)



The Black-legged Tick is tiny, shown on a sesame seed bun for size comparison (CDC photo)

The Black-legged Tick, also called a Deer Tick, is infamous for carrying Lyme disease. Porter County is a state hotspot for Lyme disease. The Black-legged tick can be found on a wide range of hosts, including mammals, birds and reptiles. In our area, the primary hosts are mice, small rodents and white tailed deer. Black-legged ticks can also carry Ehrlichiosis, which occurs primarily in the southern part of the state. In addition, they carry another, more recently identified disease, Powassan virus neuroinvasive disease (encephalitis and/or meningitis). There has been only 1 case diagnosed in Indiana, but it is particularly dangerous because there is no treatment.

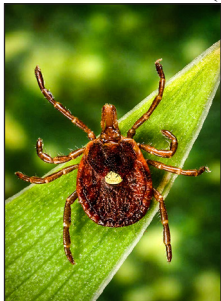
American Dog Tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*)



Female American Dog Tick on a blade of grass (Photo: Jim Gathany)

The American Dog Tick is the most common tick in Indiana. It prefers dogs but also bites humans. It can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) and also a disease called Tularemia, which is rare in Indiana. RMSF is more common but, fortunately, most cases occur in the southern part of the state.

Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)



Female Lone Star Tick on a blade of grass (Photo: Jim Gathany)

The Lone Star Tick is smaller than the American Dog Tick and faster moving. According to the Indiana State Department of Health, the Lone Star Tick occurs primarily in southern Indiana, although the population has been moving northward due to the growth of the white-tailed deer population and is established in Porter County. The Lone Star Tick transmits Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI), Ehrlichiosis and Tularemia (rare). All these diseases occur primarily in the southern part of the state for now.

Preventing Tick Bites

Ticks live in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas and on animals. You don't need to be hiking in the woods to encounter ticks. In Beverly Shores, you can pick them up pulling garlic mustard, gardening, walking your dog, or stepping onto the shoulder of Beverly Drive. They are hard to avoid. Some steps to prevent tick bites include:

- **Dress appropriately** by wearing:
 - Light-colored clothing (so you can see them)
 - Long-sleeved shirts, tucked into pants
 - Socks and closed-toe shoes
 - Long pants with legs tucked into socks
 - **Treat clothing and gear** with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear and remains protective through several washings. You can also buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear from companies such as L.L. Bean and REI.
 - **Use insect repellents** containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE), para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone. The EPA has a search tool (<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>) to help you select a repellent. Always follow the safety instructions when using these products.
 - **Check for ticks often on:**
 - All joints: behind the knees, between fingers and toes, and on underarms
 - Other areas where ticks are commonly found: belly button, neck, hairline, top of the head, and in and behind the ears
 - Areas of pressure points, including anywhere that clothing presses tightly on the skin
 - Visually check entire body, and run fingers gently over skin
 - **Check gear and pets** for ticks
 - **Shower** after all outdoor activities are over for the day
 - **Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat** for 20-30 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing
 - **What should you do if you find a tick?**
 - Remove the tick using tweezers: grasp it close to the skin and then pull outward with steady and even pressure. Pull slowly and steadily without twisting until it lets go.
 - Save the tick. Place it in a plastic container or bag so it can be tested for disease, if needed.
 - Wash the bite area well with soap and water and put an antiseptic lotion or cream on the site.
 - Call your healthcare provider to find out about follow-up care and testing of the tick for disease bacteria.
 - You can also send the tick to be tested by a lab such TICKCHECK
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