

DON'T LET TICKS KEEP YOU OFF THE TRAILS

I was a bit remiss this year, but it's long past time to re-awaken good habits to avoid the risk of complications related to tick bites. Both campuses offer many fine trails, but it is clear that the incidence of tick borne illness is increasing. The most important strategy is to...**AVOID DIRECT CONTACT WITH TICKS**. To manage your risk, you do need to be pretty rigorous:

- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails and paths-don't brush against vegetation if you can help it.
- Wear long pants, and tuck in your pant legs.
- Wear a hat and long sleeved shirt for extra protection.
- Wear light colored and tightly woven clothing to more easily see ticks.
- Use insect repellents: products with DEET may be used on skin and clothing. Products with Permethrin use only on clothing.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors to wash off and more easily find ticks that are crawling on you.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from a tick infested area. They seek out the tight, warm places-behind joints, the groin, waistbands, behind ears.
- Ticks range in size from the head of a pin and therefore easily overlooked, to the size of a pencil eraser. The black legged or deer tick is the smallest and most difficult to detect. These are the carriers of Lyme disease. In the early part of the season the concern is contact with the smallest nymph stage,
- Remove ticks from your skin immediately with pointy tweezers, grasping the tick's head parts as close to your skin as possible. If mouthparts remain embedded in skin, contact your physician. Wash the bite area, apply antiseptic and cover with a band-aid. Ticks are slow feeders. Risk of infection is greatly reduced if they are removed within 24 hours.
- If you have pets be sure to treat them with broad spectrum tick repellent.
- For more information go to: www.cdc.gov/ticks

If you remove an obvious dog tick from your skin, clean the bite area thoroughly and watch for complications over the next few days. If you confirm or even suspect a bite from a deer tick, contact your doctor immediately. Blood tests can detect Lyme exposure and a course of prophylactic antibiotics may be warranted to prevent disease complications