

Ticks Live Here Too

Deer Ticks and Lyme Disease Risk

Hokyoji is located in an area identified by the Minnesota Department of Health as a high-risk area for tick-borne diseases. Deer ticks can be encountered here as well as common wood (or “dog”) ticks. Deer ticks sometimes carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.

The Hokyoji Zen Practice Community wants to be sure that all visitors to Hokyoji are aware of the potential for deer tick bites, the risks associated with them, and the steps that will minimize danger.

Deer ticks and Lyme disease

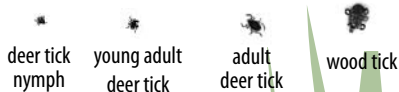
Lyme disease is a bacterial infection acquired through the bite of an infected deer tick. The disease is treated with an antibiotic and is most easily treated when diagnosed at early stages. An infection not treated can (but does not always) result in serious complications, eventually including devastating rheumatologic, neurological and cardiac conditions.

Not all deer tick bites will cause Lyme disease. Only a small percentage of deer ticks actually carry the bacteria, and not all bites, even from an infected tick, will transmit the disease.

The deer tick

Smaller than the familiar wood or dog tick, the deer tick is about the size of a poppy seed, a little larger in its adult stage.

Approximate actual size images
(with this page at 8 ½ x 11):



Deer tick season

May through August is the period of greatest danger for deer tick bites. The ticks are in the nymph stage at this time of year, the stage at which they have the most interest in human flesh. Precaution is strongly recommended, however, during any time other than the coldest winter months.



Please don't feed the ticks

The first line of defense is keeping ticks away from your body. Deer ticks are typically on grasses and other vegetation at ground level.

They do not jump, but attach themselves to clothing or skin on contact. Steps for minimizing the possibility of bites include:



Remain on paths and areas where the grass has been mowed when out of doors.



Wear long pants tucked into socks or boot tops, preferably light colored to make the ticks more visible. Wear long-sleeve shirts and tuck them in. Wear hats.



Use insect repellent containing DEET, and be sure to apply it around pant legs and boot tops. The Mayo Clinic recommends: *Apply an insect repellent with a 20 percent to 30 percent concentration of DEET to your skin and clothing. Choose the concentration based on the hours of protection you need — a 20 percent concentration is effective for about two hours, while higher concentrations protect longer. Keep in mind that chemical repellents can be toxic, and use only the amount needed for the time you'll be outdoors. Don't use DEET on the hands of young children or on infants younger than age 2 months. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, oil of lemon eucalyptus, a more natural product, offers the same protection as DEET when used in similar concentrations.*

Permethrin products (Permanone, Duranon and others) are another repellent option that can be applied to clothing. Permethrin is more toxic, kills ticks on contact, and must not be applied to skin.



Inspect your skin carefully and frequently and remove any ticks found. A deer tick must be attached at least 24 hours to transmit the disease. *Prompt removal of attached ticks prevents infection.*



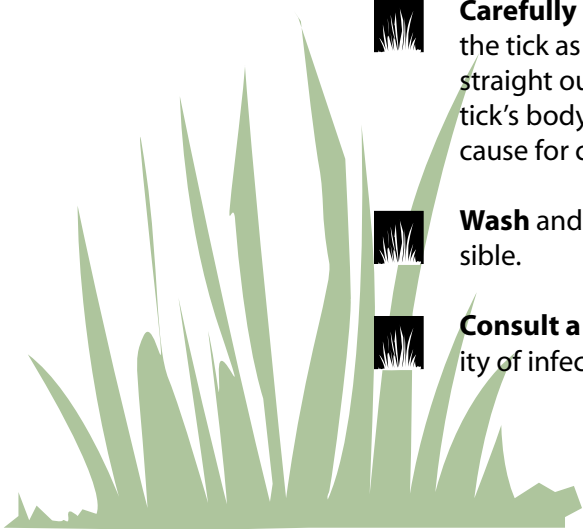
Carefully remove attached ticks with tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pulling straight out with a slow, steady force. Avoid crushing the tick's body. Mouth parts remaining in the skin are not a cause for concern.



Wash and dry clothing at high temperatures when possible.



Consult a physician if any symptoms suggest the possibility of infection.



Symptoms of Lyme disease

If you have one or more of the following signs or symptoms within 30 days after a known or suspected deer tick bite, consult a physician immediately:

a rash

The characteristic Lyme disease rash is called a “bull’s-eye rash” because of its circular form and target-like appearance. The rash can take different forms, however, including a diffuse body rash, and an infection does not always produce a rash.

fever and chills

muscle and joint pain

fatigue

headache

Lyme disease sometimes goes un-diagnosed because its symptoms mimic many other diseases, so it is important to be sure you have the proper tests if you have reason to think this is a possibility.



Enlarged deer tick images with a dime.

Please let us know

If you have any complications from a deer tick bite during or following your visit to Hokyoji, you can help us provide better protection for visitors by sharing information about your experience.

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Other tick-borne diseases

Two other diseases, apparently less common than Lyme disease, can be transmitted by the deer tick: human anaplasmosis and babesiosis. The signs and symptoms of these are sudden and severe and include high fever, muscle aches, chills and shaking, and severe headache—and less frequently nausea, vomiting, cough, and aching joints. Anaplasmosis and babesiosis can be treated with antibiotics.

More Information

A binder kept in the cottage at Hokyoji contains articles and brochures with additional information on deer ticks and Lyme disease. Many web sites provide information and advice. These are recommended:

The Minnesota Department of Health:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us>
(diseases/tick borne diseases)

The Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com>
(Find it fast: “L”/Lyme disease)

The Minnesota Department of Health web site is gratefully acknowledged for information in this brochure including the image above.

