

Medical Watch on Ticks

April 23, 2013

The western blacklegged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) can transmit the organisms responsible for causing anaplasmosis and Lyme disease in humans and has recently been found in areas close to Pepperdine's Malibu Campus in Agoura Hills, Malibu Creek Park, and Tapia State Park. This tick is distributed along the Pacific coast of the United States. Wild rodents and other mammals are likely reservoirs of these pathogens. Larvae and nymphs feed on birds and small rodents, while adult ticks feed on deer and other mammals. Adult ticks are primarily associated with pathogen transmission to humans.

To avoid a tick bite, stay on trails and avoid wooded areas. Wear long pants, long sleeved shirts, and socks.

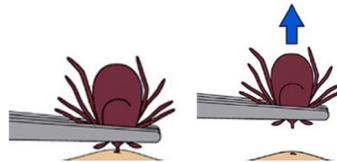
If you find a tick attached to your skin, there's no need to panic. There are several tick removal devices on the market, but a plain set of fine-tipped tweezers will remove a tick quite effectively.

IF YOU ARE BIT BY A TICK:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.



Avoid folklore remedies such as "painting" the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly, or using heat to make the tick detach from the skin. Your goal is to remove the tick as quickly as possible--not waiting for it to detach.



4. Place the tick in a plastic bag and consult with your doctor. The doctor can send the tick in to test for Lyme Disease.
5. Signs of Lyme Disease can start 3-30 days after with a spreading red rash around the site of the bite, fever, chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
6. Laboratory tests are not recommended for patients who do not have symptoms typical of Lyme disease. Lyme Disease can be treated with an antibiotic if found early but NO antibiotic is needed for tick bites alone until Lyme Disease is strongly suspected or confirmed.
7. For more information, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>.