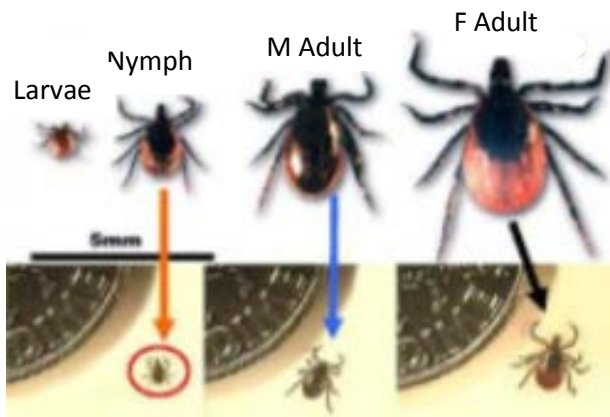


Preventing Tick Borne Illness

Tick-borne illness is spreading in Minnesota. Blacklegged ticks (deer ticks) are more prevalent in the forested areas of the state, but their reach spreads with each passing year. In 2013 Minnesota had a record high number of reported Lyme disease cases; deer tick caused diseases human anaplasmosis and babesiosis were also at high numbers. Besides these three commonly reported diseases, deer ticks carry the agents for Powassan disease and a new form of human ehrlichiosis. American dog ticks (“wood ticks”), which are very common in spring and early summer throughout Minnesota, can carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF). While RMSF is not common, a small number of RMSF cases have occurred in Minnesotans who did not travel outside the state.



In early spring and summer, blacklegged (deer) tick nymphs and adult females are most active. Many people who develop tick-borne illness never knew they were bitten. That’s because nymphs are so small they can feed virtually undetected.

If a deer tick has bitten you, or you are unsure if it is a deer tick, remove the tick carefully and place it in a container and bring it to your medical practitioner. If it is a deer tick your physician will evaluate you for Lyme disease. If a known tick bite/illness is associated with work, report it to your supervisor.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, the best ways to protect yourself from tick-borne illness is as follows:

- Avoid wooded and brushy habitat when possible. Walk in the middle of trails when feasible.
- Use an insect repellent with 20-30% DEET. Apply it to exposed skin and clothing.
- Use secondary prevention measures such as tick gaiters or wrapping duct tape around wrists and ankles to prevent crawling ticks. Light colored clothing can help you spot crawling ticks more easily.
- Check your body and clothing for ticks immediately after activities in a wooded and brushy habitat.
- Remove ticks promptly. Ticks typically must be attached for 24 hours in order to transmit infection.
- Change clothes and put field clothes in the dryer for 1 hour to kill ticks.
- Take a shower as soon as possible after outdoor activities.

