

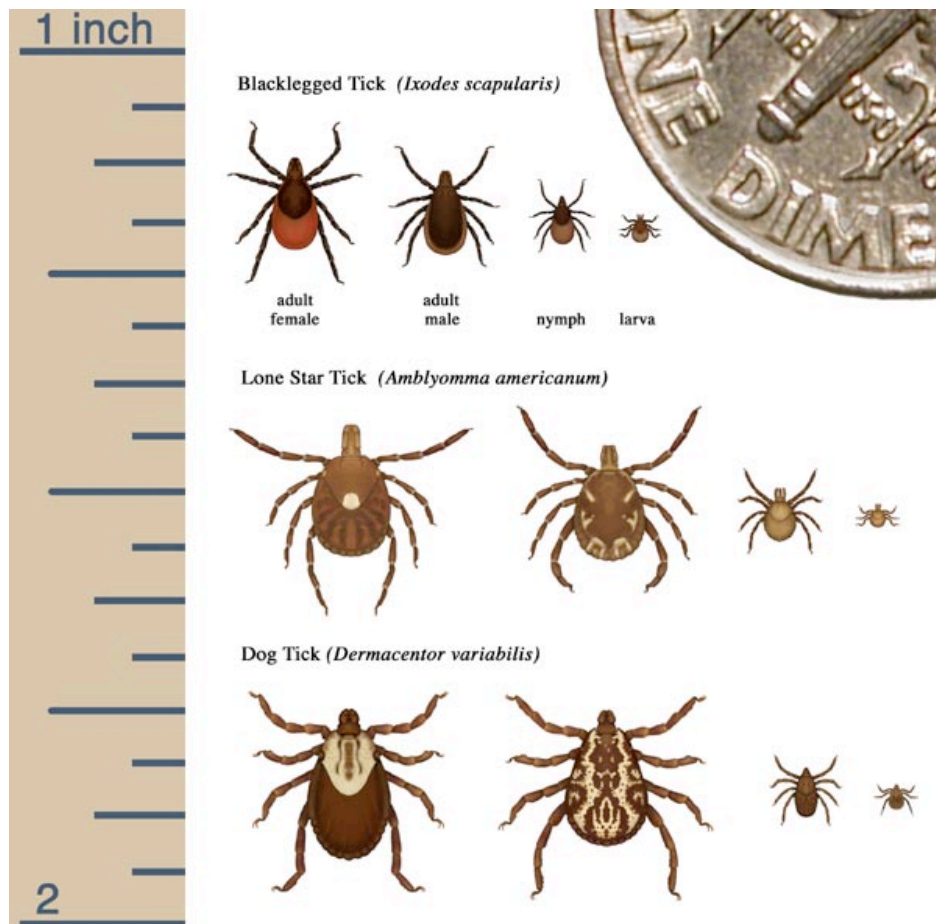
Tick Bites

Tick bites are pretty common in Connecticut, especially if you spend any time outdoors in wooded areas. While it is true that ticks can carry disease, it is important to remember that most tick bites are completely harmless and often go unnoticed.

SO DON'T PANIC!

We are usually concerned with two kinds of tick, the dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) and the deer or blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis* or *pacificus*). The dog tick is about the size of a watermelon seed, and usually does not carry disease in Connecticut, although it is the primary vector for transmitting Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. The deer tick, on the other hand, particularly in the nymph stage, is the primary vector for transmitting Lyme disease and babesiosis. Deer ticks are quite small, about the size of a poppy seed, and difficult to see. The Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*) can also be found in Connecticut, but it is much less common.

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An Ounce of Prevention...

There are some simple steps you can take to help avoid tick bites.

- Wear light colored clothing. It's easier to see ticks (and cooler, too).
- When walking in tick infested areas, stay to the center of the path, avoiding vegetation when possible, and tuck your pants into your socks.
- Use insect repellants containing DEET, especially on shoes and clothing. Products containing up to 30% DEET are safe and effective.
- Keep pets as tick free as possible. Do not feed wild deer or encourage them around your property. Trim tall grass in areas where children play.
- Most importantly, do daily inspections after being outdoors in tick infested areas. Check the entire body and remove any ticks you may find. Ticks must usually be attached for at least 24-36 hours to transmit Lyme disease. Daily inspection and removal may be your most important tool.

Safely Remove Ticks

If you find a tick, you should remove it as soon as possible. Early removal is key to preventing Lyme transmission.

- Clean the area gently with rubbing alcohol.
- Using a fine-tipped tweezers, firmly grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Slowly, but firmly, pull the tick straight up and away from the skin. Do not squeeze the body of the tick. Do not twist.
- Cleanse the area afterwards with soap and water.
- Do not dig around under the skin to remove retained fragments of the tick's body. This will likely increase the risk of local infection. Retained fragments will be expelled by natural shedding of the skin.
- Testing ticks for Lyme or other diseases is usually not indicated. Be sure the tick is dead before discarding it.

Know the Signs

Following these instructions should significantly reduce your risk of tick transmitted disease. However, there are certain things to watch for.

- Watch for redness around the bite site, or rashes distant from the site. 70-80% of Lyme patients will develop a characteristic bull's-eye rash up to 30 days following the tick bite.
- Patients may also experience flu-like symptoms like fever, headache, achiness, and fatigue, although these symptoms are obviously not specific for tick borne illnesses.
- In later stages of disease, some patients may experience weakness in facial muscles (Bell's Palsy), joint swelling, and even more severe symptoms resulting from infections of the brain or heart.

Please call if your child develops symptoms of a tick borne illness like Lyme disease. Your child will need to be seen and further testing or treatment may be needed.