

Tick Check

Yes! It's that time of year again! The ticks are looking for sources of nutrition so that they can grow strong and healthy! Unfortunately, animals and people are a great source of that nutrition. The biggest concern is the possibility of contracting Lyme Disease. Here are a few facts and thoughts about ticks and management.

First and foremost: Do not fear going outside. Children should be shown how to check for ticks but should not be taught to fear ticks. With a little knowledge and diligence, the risk of Lyme Disease can be reduced. The benefits of long walks in the woods or an afternoon at the playground far outweigh the risks.

Some facts about ticks:

- They have 8 legs (insects have six) and are arachnids like spiders.
- It is the deer ticks that transmit Lyme Disease.
- The larger dog ticks are annoying, but if you make yourself strong of heart and just pluck them off and drop them in the toilet, they're nothing to worry about.
- Deer ticks must be attached for 36-72 hours to transmit disease.
- Not every deer tick carries Lyme Disease.
- Each tick only feeds once in its life, so they aren't prowling from person to person.
- Ticks avoid open sunny places like our playground but that doesn't mean that they will never be there.

Still, deer ticks aren't to be taken lightly. Children should be checked after outdoor excursions and each night. Bath time is excellent for a full body check. Lyme disease is most often transmitted by immature ticks called nymphs. They are really small, so look carefully. If you find one, remove it with fine tipped tweezers. Pull gently up and away from the skin. If the head separates from the body and stays in the skin, try to remove it with the tweezers, but don't panic. It will heal over. The germs are in the body of the tick, put ineloquently. Wash the area with soap and water or rubbing alcohol. Call your pediatrician if you have concerns.

Some forms of prevention are especially well suited to home and family activities:

- Insect repellent with 20% DEET which must be reapplied every 2 hours. (DEET is a powerful chemical, so we'd need your written permission if you want us to use it at D4C.)
- Permethrin treated clothing.
- Wearing long sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into your socks.

The CDC is an excellent source of up to date information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/transmission/index.html> Check this link for a good photo of the relative size of dog ticks, deer ticks and their nymphs and way more information than I have shared here!

At DCCCC we will check for ticks after outdoor play. We'll let you know if we find anything interesting. In the meantime, play hard and go outside often.