

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

(formerly Cook County Bureau of Health Services)

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Residents should get out and enjoy the warm weather, but remember to watch for ticks.

Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials remind residents to prevent against tick bites while outdoors enjoying the warmer weather. Ticks are found in and near wooded areas, tall grass and brush. Infected ticks can transmit diseases including ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia and Lyme disease through their bites.

Ticks are found in grass, shrubs, brush, and other vegetation. When brushed by a moving body, they quickly let loose of the plant on which they are resting and attach to an animal or human. The only way to prevent the transmission of diseases ticks may be carrying is to avoid being bitten by one.

“I encourage residents to get out and enjoy the warmer weather in the coming days and months, just take precautions,” said CCDPH chief operating officer Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D, M.P.H. “When taking a bike ride or a walk in areas covered with heavy brush, avoid being bitten by wearing repellent and checking yourself for ticks if you have ventured into areas where they may be present.”

People need to recognize the signs and symptoms of tickborne diseases so they can receive the appropriate medical care. If a person experiences a tick bite accompanied by a rash or an unexplained illness with a fever, he or she should seek medical attention. In some cases, if not treated, some tickborne disease can cause severe illness and may be fatal.

To avoid tick bites, health officials suggest:

- When in heavily wooded areas, stay on well traveled paths and walk in the center of the trail to avoid brushing up against bushes and weeds.
- When returning from heavily wooded areas, check yourself and children carefully for ticks - especially in their hair.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET (30 percent or less) to clothes or exposed skin (except the face). Be sure to wash treated skin after coming indoors. Always follow label directions and supervise children while using repellents.
- Wear clothes that will help to shield you from ticks. Light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants are best. Tuck your pants into the top of your socks or boots, to create a “tick barrier.”
- Remove ticks slowly with tweezers. Do not use nail polish remover or burning matches - they aren't safe or effective.
- Keep your grass mowed and keep weeds cut around your home.
- If ticks are found on pets, contact your veterinarian for information about appropriate tick treatment removal.

More information is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks>.