

May is National Tick Awareness Month – Be Tick Aware!

Scarborough Conservation Commission

<https://www.scarboroughmaine.org/government/boards-committees/conservation-commission>

During the pandemic, many of us have taken to the outdoors for exercise, fresh air and the solace of being outside in nature. As this trend continues and the weather warms, it's important to remember our outdoor surroundings and to be **tick aware**. Everyone can enjoy the great outdoors, despite the presence of ticks, by taking these ten recommended safety precautions:

1. Avoid wooded or bushy areas, tall grass and leaf litter.
2. Walk in the center of trails.
3. Wear protective clothing - light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants to see ticks more easily, and closed-toe footwear. Tuck pant legs into your socks and your shirt into your pants to keep ticks off your skin.
4. Use natural repellents made from essential oil that include lemon eucalyptus, cedar or citronella, which will repel ticks for 30 minutes to 2 hours. These natural repellents need to be applied more frequently than DEET-based products, but do not carry the same health risks. If you decide to use repellents with DEET, use them sparingly and consider applying to clothing rather than your skin to reduce exposure to this pesticide, which can penetrate human skin and be partially absorbed into the bloodstream.
5. Treating clothing, boots, backpacks, etc. with products containing permethrin can be an effective way to repel ticks. However, this topical insecticide is a suspected human carcinogen and toxicant, and is very toxic to cats and fish. If you choose to use permethrin, be sure to follow the directions exactly. Spray the items outdoors and do not touch them until dry (2 to 4 hours). Wear a mask to avoid inhalation. Do not treat the inside of tents, sleeping bags, gloves or any other gear or clothing that will come in direct contact with your skin.
6. Check your clothing, gear and pets for ticks before you come indoors.
7. Do a full-body tick check on yourself and your children when back indoors. Ticks can attach anywhere on the body, but prefer warm, moist areas, so be sure to check under the arms, behind the knees, between the legs, in the belly button, in and around the ears, and on scalps.
8. Shower within two hours of coming indoors. Showering helps wash off unattached ticks and is a good opportunity to do a tick check.
9. Place clothes in a dryer on high heat to kill ticks on clothing.
10. Remove attached ticks as soon as possible using tweezers, a tick spoon or tick key. Grasp the tick as close to the head and the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick. Once removed, put tick in rubbing alcohol, and wash the bite site and your hands with soap and water. Apply antiseptic to bite site and monitor for any changes. Contact your doctor's office with any questions or concerns about a tick bite or any tick-borne disease symptoms.

Town of Scarborough

259 US Route One | PO Box 360 | Scarborough, ME 04070 | P: 207.730.4000 | scarboroughmaine.org

By following these precautions and **committing to thorough, full-body tick checks every day during tick season**, you can protect yourself and your family from ticks and the diseases they carry.

Information for this article was drawn from the following sources:

National Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people);

Maine Center for Disease Control (www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease);

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vector-borne/lyme/tick-prevention-and-property-management.shtml>

Maine Medical Center Research Institute (www.ticksinmaine.com/prevention);

https://mmcri.org/?page_id=25046

Cumberland County Soil & Water District (www.cumberlandswcd.org/site/yardscape-2/)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e4af21b92caed7f481a25b7/t/5f32a90c8673533c19d140e1/1597155603307/ticks.pdf>

Beyond Pesticides- To find toxicity information about specific pesticides.

(www.beyondpesticides.org/resources/pesticide-gateway)

Visit their websites for more detailed information.