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For Immediate Release

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## Protect Against Tick-borne Diseases When Enjoying the Great Outdoors

**DUPAGE COUNTY** - Warmer weather is here and as you make plans to be outdoors, the DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) is reminding residents to protect themselves and their families from diseases spread by tick bites.

Ticks are a threat year-round but are more active in warmer months - especially April through September. [Know where to expect ticks](#). Ticks live in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas, or on animals. Spending time outside walking your dog, camping, gardening, or hunting could bring you in close contact with ticks. Many people get ticks in their own yard or neighborhood.

Ticks can transmit several diseases, including Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and ehrlichiosis. Ticks that can carry these diseases have been found in DuPage County. In recent years, Gulf Coast ticks collected from forest preserves in DuPage County have tested positive for *Rickettsia parkeri* which is closely related to *Rickettsia rickettsii*, the causative agent of Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF).

If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove the tick as soon as possible. [Removing ticks](#) right away can lower the chance of illness.

How to remove a tick:

1. Use clean, fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you cannot remove the mouth easily with tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
3. After removing the tick, clean the tweezers or tick removal tool with alcohol and thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
4. Never crush a tick with your fingers. Dispose of a live tick by:
  - Putting it in alcohol,
  - Placing it in a sealed bag/container,
  - Wrapping it tightly in tape, or
  - Flushing it down the toilet

-More-

Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

[Watch for symptoms for 30 days.](#) Call your healthcare provider if you get any of the following:

- Rash
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint swelling and pain

Early treatment is important. Symptoms may occur from 3 to 30 days after a bite from an infected tick.

[To protect against tick bites and the diseases they can spread:](#)

- **Know where to expect ticks.** You may get a tick on you during outdoor activities around your home or when walking through leaves and bushes. To avoid ticks, walk in the center of trails and avoid walking through tall bushes or other vegetation.
- **Repel ticks on skin and clothing.** Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an [online tool to help you select the repellent](#) that is best for you and your family. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5% permethrin.
- **Perform daily tick checks.** Check your body for ticks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Check clothes and pets carefully and remove any ticks that are found. Place clothes into a dryer on high heat to kill ticks.
- **Prevent ticks on animals.** [Prevent family pets from bringing ticks into the home](#) by limiting their access to tick-infested areas and by using veterinarian-prescribed tick prevention products on your dog.
- **Create tick-safe zones in your yard.** [Modify your landscaping to create “Tick-Safe Zones.”](#) It’s pretty simple. Keep patios, play areas, and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation. Regularly remove leaves, clear tall grasses and brush around your home, and place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks away from recreational areas (and away from you).

Additional information on *Rickettsia parkeri* rickettsiosis and other tickborne diseases can be found on the DCHD website at [www.dupagehealth.org/234/Tick-Borne-Diseases](http://www.dupagehealth.org/234/Tick-Borne-Diseases).

DuPage County residents with questions about ticks may call the Health Department at (630) 682-7400. DCHD has tick removal kits available for residents at health department locations. Find a DCHD location near you at [www.dupagehealth.org/Facilities](http://www.dupagehealth.org/Facilities).

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