Ticks

Ticks are small spider-like creatures that live off the blood of other animals. Different species of ticks can be found throughout the world. In New England several species of ticks are common. They are the Blacklegged tick, American dog tick, Brown dog tick and the Lone star tick (pictured in order below).

All of them will bite humans and are capable of transmitting disease. They can be found at anytime of year but are most active in warmer months (April-September). To reduce the risk of getting bit (and sick) from a tick there are a few steps you can take.

1. **Avoidance**: Not as easy as it sounds. Ticks prefer the shade and are likely to be found in wooded areas and high grass. They often wait with their front legs out for something to pass by that they can grab on to but they can travel (often on pets) and find you. Stay on cleared paths when walking in the woods, keep grass trimmed and remove leaf litter in yards. Use mulch along the edge of your lawn and play areas as it acts like a barrier that ticks tend not to cross. Landscape with items that deter deer and rodents who can carry ticks into your yard and treat pets with tick prevention products made specifically for them. There are also chemical treatments for yards that can be used by homeowners or professionals to greatly decrease the population of ticks in the area.

2. **Use Repellent**: Products containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) in concentrations of 20-30% can be used on exposed skin and clothing for
protection that can last for several hours. (Also helpful for mosquitos!) Avoid hands, eyes and mouth and always follow product directions. Permethrin (0.5%) can be used on clothing, shoes and gear (backpacks, tents etc.) to help repel ticks as well. It will last for several washings but should not be placed directly on skin.

3. **Tick Checks**: Check yourself for ticks after you've been outside. Use a mirror to view all areas. Pay close attention to hair, ears, armpits, waist, belly button, groin and behind knees. Remove all ticks you find right away. Check children, gear and pets as well. Ticks can hitch a ride inside on something else and find you later. Showering as soon as possible after being outside (best if done within 2 hours) helps wash loose ticks away. Place items in the dryer (on high heat) or in the sun to kill any ticks you may have missed.

If the tick has attached use tweezers to grip the tick as close as possible to the surface of the skin. Pull straight away from the skin with a steady, even pressure and avoid twisting or jerking motions that can cause the tick to break. (see photo below) Then clean the area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

Do not cover a tick with nail polish or vaseline and do not use heat to make it detach. Dispose of live ticks by drowning them in alcohol, wrapping them in tape or placing them in an air-tight container or bag. Never crush them and always wash your hands after touching them. Watch for signs of illness (eg. fever or rash or flu-like symptoms) in the days and weeks following the bite and see your doctor if illness occurs.
Remember...being aware of ticks and taking extra steps to avoid them can greatly reduce your chances of getting a tick-borne illness. Enjoy your summer!!
Sheryl Bliss, RN

The New School Year

I know it must seem strange to be talking about next year when we are so close to summer vacation, but we want you and your children to be prepared for next year. Here are a few reminders of things that your child will need next year. Summer is a good time to make appointments!

- If your student will need medication in school, they will need a new prescription for the new school year. Each year a new prescription is required, even if they have had this medication for years. This includes inhalers and EpiPens! Even if the medication is over-the-counter (like Lactaid or ibuprofen in the lower grades) a prescription is necessary for the student to take medication in school.
- If your student is entering 7th grade, they will need the following immunizations.
  - Tetanus booster
  - 2 measles, mumps and rubella
  - 3 Hepatitis B
  - 2 Varicella or documentation that the student has had chicken pox

Because immunizations are a Massachusetts law, a date will be set in September after which your child will be excluded if they are missing any of these immunizations!

- Physical exams are required by law in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10.
- If your student will be playing a fall sport, they will need a physical that is less than 13 months old to play. You may contact your school nurse if you are not sure if your student has a current physical. Hopefully you will be able to make an appointment for a physical over the summer. If not, the Minute Clinic at CVS will do sports physicals.
- If there are any changes in your child’s health over the summer, please inform your school nurse as soon as possible.
• Please also inform the school nurse if you know you are moving over the summer. That way we can get immunization records to the new school in a timely manner.
• Nurses are not in their offices on a regular basis over the summer; however we do periodically check our emails. Emailing is the best way to contact us during the summer. In case of an emergency, you may call the main office at your child’s school and they will get in touch with us.
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From all of the nurses, we wish you a happy, healthy and safe summer!

Lori Johnson, RN

HEALTHY EATING AND EXERCISE- A GUIDE TO SUMMER 2016

During the last ten years, there has been an increase in concern with the healthy eating and healthy lifestyle of our nation’s children. According to the Center for Disease Control, the year 2000 saw a rise in childhood obesity, finding that one out of every three children were obese or at risk for obesity. As we and our children see an increase in our knowledge and in the availability of technological devices, we have seen a decrease in the level of physical activity. As families become busier and more children are involved in after school or extra curricular activities, the evening dinner meals at home have become a thing of the past and parents may opt for fast food, which contains more salt, fat and calories.

Our government and our schools have addressed some of these issues. Michelle Obama made her “Let’s Move!’ campaign and the availability of fresh vegetables and fruits part of her legacy. It attempts to expose children at an early age to healthier lifestyle habits, empower parents and caregivers with knowledge, promote a healthy physical lifestyle, promote healthy foods in school and increase the availability of fresh foods.

Most pediatricians recommend 60 to 90 minutes of active exercise and movement for children. Students are encouraged to play at recess and during physical education time at school. But this is not enough and after school activity should be
encouraged. During nicer weather, children can go outside and play running games, ride a bike, go for walks with friends and just enjoy nature. Parents can accompany their children after dinner on a family walk, taking different paths to reduce boredom, walk to the store or market, go to a local park or hike on one of the many hiking trails in our area. Our after school programs function on the belief of promoting healthy exercise by including yoga, mat-ball, gardening and girls on the run in the program offerings.

Healthy eating was addressed by the legislature through the “Healthy Kids Act of 2010”. In order for schools to get reimbursement from the federal government for breakfast and lunch programs, certain guidelines need to be met. Food items are limited to the amount of salt or sugar that they may contain and have to have a necessary amount of protein. Pizza, wraps and bagels were changed to whole wheat items, to improve digestion and improve the quality of the nutritional value. Whole vegetables and fruits are offered and must account for a certain percentage of the lunch or breakfast meal. Many schools have begun to grow gardens within their school grounds, teaching children how to grow these items, to be responsible for the production, encouraging them to be more active and to learn about eating these healthier options instead.

As children and their families plan the summer months, it is important to remember that there are many ways to move and be active outside or when confined to the home during inclement weather. Learn a new sport or activity but do it for 90 minutes per day. And get a taste for a new healthy summer snack! Perhaps families can grow their own outside gardens and enjoy family time together, be active and eat healthier all at once!

Joan Thorne, RN

Summer Water Safety

One of the great pleasures on a hot summer day is to jump into cool, refreshing water. Whether you are at the ocean, a lake or a backyard pool there are certain steps you can take to remain safe and healthy while around water. The sad fact is that drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death for children. Below are some tips to help keep everyone safe:

*NEVER LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED NEAR WATER. Babies can drown in one inch of water.
*Make sure your child knows how to swim. This won’t prevent children from drowning but it will decrease the risk if they have had some formal swimming instruction.

*One of the best things for parents to do is learn CPR. If the unthinkable should happen, a quick response could make the difference in the outcome.

*Secure fencing around residential pools is a must. Fences should be at least 4 feet tall and slatted. Even young children can climb a chain link fence. Make sure pool gates are self-latching and at a height a young child can’t reach. Alarms add another layer of protection.

*Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd’s hook (long pole with a hook at the end)) and a life preserver nearby. Always have life jackets available for everyone if you are going out on a boat.

*Water temperature is important. Enter the water slowly and make sure it is comfortable.

*Don’t forget sunscreen. Reapply if often, especially if kids are getting wet. Hats and sunglasses also provide needed protection.

*Kids should drink plenty of fluids while out in the sun to prevent dehydration.

*If you are supervising children near water, put the cellphone away. Tragedy can happen in minutes if you are distracted. Children should receive all of your attention.

*Remove ladders from above ground pools when not in use.

The most important thing you can have around water is vigilance. With these precautions, go outside and enjoy the sunshine and summer fun.