

## Lyme Disease Prevention for Field Trips



Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that may develop after a bite from a Lyme-infected blacklegged tick. These ticks also spread other diseases, which are collectively known as co-infections.

The field trip activity planned for your child's class may expose students to blacklegged ticks. To reduce the risk of a bite, consider following these prevention strategies.

### Minimize exposed skin

Long sleeves, pants and hats help prevent bites because blacklegged ticks cannot bite through clothing. These ticks do not jump or fall from trees. Instead, they typically crawl to the edge of a leaf or blade of grass and wait for something to brush against them. Once on clothing, they will search until they find exposed skin to bite.

### Use Insecticides and Repellents

Insecticides and repellents reduce the risk of a tick bite. Insecticides kill ticks; repellents encourage them to leave before biting. You should use both to ensure maximal protection.

- **Permethrin** is an insecticide essential to prevention plans. Apply it to any clothing or gear that your child will be using on the field trip before he/she enters tick habitat. It is not intended to be used directly on skin. Permethrin is very safe and is extensively used by the military. It bonds to treated articles and will remain effective for 2-6 weeks and through multiple washings. Permethrin products are sold at outdoor stores and on-line. Some products are sold as concentrated liquids that need to be diluted prior to use and others are ready-to-use sprays. Permethrin-treated articles should be thoroughly dry prior to use.

There are several repellents available for purchase. Because the effectiveness of most "natural products" hasn't been proven, look for products with one of these ingredients:

- **Picaridin** is repellent that is applied to unbroken skin. Look for concentrations of 15 - 20%, which protect for 6 - 8 hours. Picaridin doesn't have a scent or feel oily. It won't harm natural or synthetic fabrics or gear. Picaridin is safe for children of all ages.
- **DEET** is the best known repellent; use it on unbroken skin. A 30% concentration protects for 8 hours. It has a scent and feels oily. DEET won't harm wool and cotton but it can damage other fabrics and materials, such as plastic, leather or rubber. The EPA considers DEET to be safe for kids more than 2 months old.
- **IR3535** is a repellent for use on unbroken skin. It will not hurt fabrics or gear. IR3535 is safe for children of all ages. Unfortunately, it is very short-acting, lasting less than 2 hours.

### Tick Checks Are Vital



Check your child for ticks immediately after the field trip and the following 2 days. Promptly remove and save attached ticks in a re-sealable container so your doctor can examine them. To remove the tick, grab it with a tweezer as close to the skin as possible and using a steady motion, pull straight up from the skin. Wash the bite site with soap and water.

The risk of contracting Lyme disease depends on how long the tick was attached and how likely it is to be infected. While it may take 24 hours or longer to transmit Lyme, ticks can spread other co-infections in minutes to hours. Certain antibiotics may reduce the risk of Lyme disease if taken within 2 days of a bite. Contact your doctor immediately after a bite to discuss this strategy. Blood tests done shortly after a bite are unreliable.

Symptoms of Lyme disease usually begin within 30 days of a bite. Common symptoms include an expanding rash that may be solid-colored or appear as a "bull's-eye" (many patients don't get the rash), fever, chills, muscle and joint pain, headache, neck stiffness, swollen glands and neck stiffness. Contact your doctor if your child develops any of these symptoms.

