

# How to Check for Ticks

Ticks are nasty little critters that can carry diseases such as Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Unfortunately, ticks are common across the US. This brief article will help you locate ticks, and remove them from the body.

## Know what to look for:

### Step 1

Know your ticks. Ticks are parasitic arthropods, of the class arachnid. They are not insects. Ticks are more closely related to spiders. There are at least 889 species of tick in the world. In the US these are usually broken into two categories: Dog ticks and deer ticks.

Dog ticks are large, hard ticks (from about 1/8 inch to 1/2 inch when engorged), and are easily identified on the body. While dog ticks are not healthy for your dog, it is the Deer Tick, the Lone Star Tick and the Western Black-Legged Tick that carry Lyme Disease. You can easily see dog ticks, but those three are tough to see. Deer ticks are much smaller, and can be hard to spot. They are little bigger than a period, until engorged.



Two engorged dog ticks.  
The one on the bottom is on its back.



Here is a zoomed-in close-up view of the 4 stages of the Deer Tick. Note that the scale is in centimeters, not inches.

### Step 2

Act quickly. Some diseases can only be transmitted after 24 hours of the tick feeding.

### Step 3

Check yourself immediately after hiking if you're in an area where ticks are common.

## Checking for Ticks: Check From the Ground Up:

### Step 1

Find a private place, preferably a bathroom, with a mirror.

### Step 2

Check the legs and ankles first, before moving up the body. A systematic way of checking yourself helps eliminate the chance of missing ticks, especially the smaller deer ticks. (Ticks do not jump, they are picked up in passing. The majority of ticks will be on the lower half of your body.)

### Step 3

Check beneath the top few inches of your socks. Men should roll the leg hair back slowly, and check at the hair roots for deer ticks.

### Step 4

Check up the legs, on the backside of your knees, around the waist of your pants or shorts, before checking the arms.

**Step 5**

Check other visible areas of skin before undressing.

**A Thorough Once Over****Step 1**

Undress and start again from the ground up.

**Step 2**

Check everywhere you can see, inside the thighs right up to the pelvis. Check the pubic region thoroughly.

**Step 3**

Check the armpits. Ticks are fond of warm areas on the body. Men should check through the hair thoroughly.

**Step 4**

Check around the neck and hairline. Use the mirror, and feel with your fingertips. Check behind your ears. You should also check through your hair. If on the scalp, ticks will usually engorge a few inches within the hairline, so give particular attention to these areas.

**Those Hard to See Spots****Step 1**

Use the handheld mirror to view between the buttocks and on the underside of the groin.

**Step 2**

Use the handheld mirror and a wall mirror to see along your back.

**Step 3**

Use your fingers to feel in all the crevices of your body.



A tick embedded and feeding

**Removing Ticks****Step 1**

Remove ticks by pulling them out of the skin with the tweezers.

**Step 2**

Be careful to pull slowly, firmly, and in the direction of the hind quarters. Larger ticks are harder to remove, but easier to grip with the tweezers.

**Step 3**

Try to remove the entire tick. It's always best to remove the whole tick. Most diseases are passed in the tick's saliva. This is particularly the case with deer ticks.

**Check Again in a Few Days.**

**Step 1**

Check yourself again next time you're in the shower, or a few days later.

**Step 2**

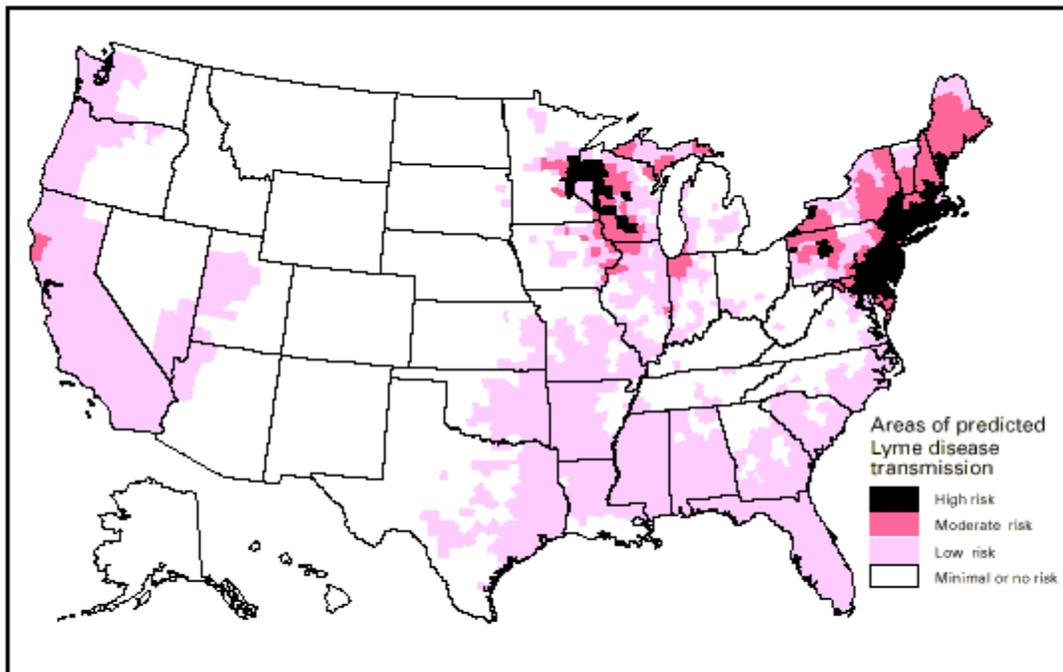
Look for any inflamed or sensitive areas on the skin. Gorged ticks will be swollen with blood and easier to find, especially in the hairline, if you missed them the first time round.

**Step 3**

Look for marks on the skin. Lyme disease is sometimes preceded by a large red bull's eye mark, known as erythema migrans. If you see this mark, whether or not you find a tick, you should call a doctor immediately.

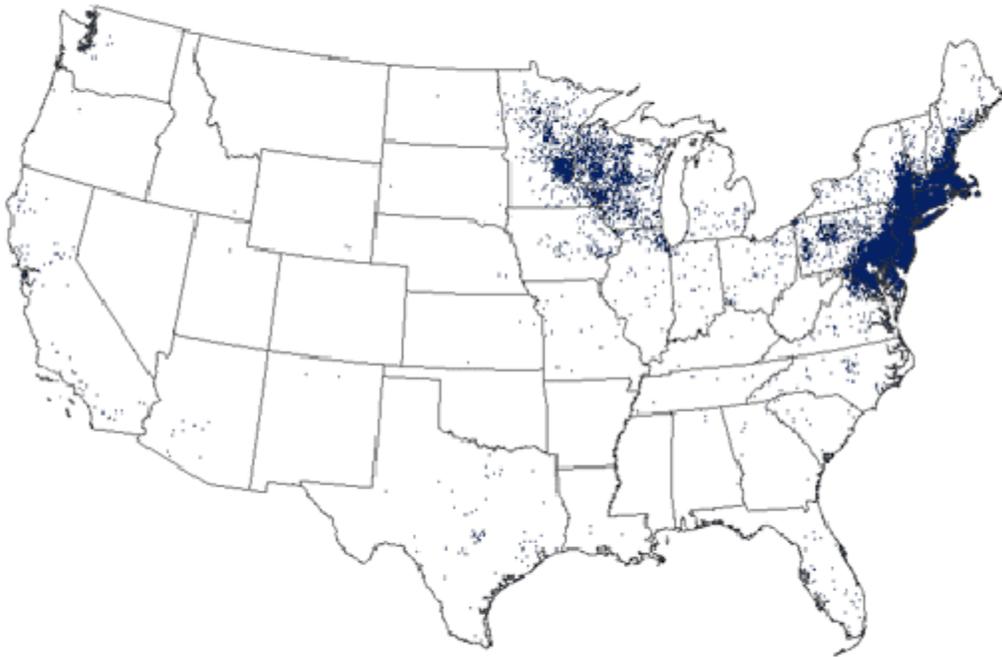


**National Lyme disease risk map with four categories of risk**



Note: This map demonstrates an approximate distribution of predicted Lyme disease risk in the United States. The true relative risk in any given county compared with other counties might differ from that shown here and might change from year to year. Risk categories are defined in the accompanying text. Information on risk distribution within states and counties is best obtained from state and local public health authorities.

## Reported cases of Lyme disease—United States, 2005



1 dot placed randomly within county of residence for each reported case