



Unit 4 Lesson 5: An Ounce of Prevention

Hey! A Tick Bit Me!

Handout 2



A tick is a tiny brown mite, which is an arachnid. (Spiders and scorpions are the other members of the arachnid family.) A tick attaches itself to the skin of an animal or reptile and sucks blood. There are hundreds of kinds of ticks on the planet, and they can be found almost everywhere. The two types of ticks that many people talk about are the deer tick and the dog tick.

The deer tick is about the same size as the head of a pin, and it is found in many parts of the United States. One of the diseases that deer ticks can carry is Lyme disease, especially ticks in New England and parts of the Midwest. (Lyme disease gets its name from the place where it was discovered - Lyme, Connecticut, which is in New England.) The dog tick is very common, and can be up to one-half inch long. If you have a dog, chances are pretty good that you've seen a dog tick on its coat. One disease that this type of tick can carry is called Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

What a Tick Bite Looks and Feels Like

A person who gets bitten by a tick usually won't feel anything at all. There might be a little redness around the area of the bite. If you think you've been bitten by a tick, tell an adult immediately. Some ticks carry disease (such as Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever) and can pass it on to people.

What You Should Do

Ask an adult to check you for ticks after you've been playing or hiking in the woods, and have him or her pay special attention to your head (including your scalp), back, neck, armpits, and groin area. If you ever find a tick on you, ask for an adult's help in removing it. Using tweezers, an adult should grab the tick as close

as he can to your skin, and pull the tick off in one motion. Don't cover the tick with petroleum jelly, rubbing alcohol, or fingernail polish, since these don't help the tick come out and can make things more complicated. If any of the tick parts are left behind, they should be removed using a sterile needle or pin. Once the tick is removed, your parent may want to put the tick in a jar to save it to show to your doctor.

What a Doctor Will Do

Doctors don't need to treat most tick bites. But if the tick was carrying Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever and passed it on, any symptoms that might mean you are sick will be treated with antibiotics. Your doctor may ask to see the tick to help make a diagnosis. If these diseases are treated early on, it's rare for there to be any lasting changes to a person's health.

How to Avoid Getting Bitten

Ticks like spending time in shrubbery, where they can remain close to the ground in order to jump on people or animals that pass by. If you are hiking in the woods, wear long sleeves and long pants, and tuck your pants into your socks. Wearing an insect repellent also might help. Have your parents apply one that contains 10% to 30% DEET.

Dogs are also very good at picking up ticks in their coats, so ask an adult to help you bathe your dog with a tick shampoo and give your dog a tick collar.

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