

PREVENTION GUIDES

After a Tick Bite: Next Steps

A calm, step-by-step reference card for what to do after finding an attached tick.

Don't panic. Not all ticks carry Lyme disease, and transmission generally requires a tick to be attached for 36–48 hours. Acting promptly and correctly significantly reduces your risk.

STEP 1: REMOVE THE TICK CORRECTLY

Use fine-tipped tweezers. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure — do not twist or jerk.

- DO use fine-tipped tweezers
- DO grasp close to the skin surface
- DO pull upward with steady, even pressure
- DO clean the bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water after removal
- DO NOT use petroleum jelly, nail polish, or heat
- DO NOT squeeze or crush the tick's body
- DO NOT try to "make the tick back out" — just remove it

STEP 2: SAVE THE TICK

Place the tick in a sealed plastic bag or container with a small piece of damp paper towel. Note the date. If you develop symptoms, having the tick can be helpful for identification.

- Place in sealed zip-lock bag
- Note the date it was removed
- Note the body location where it was found
- Note how long it appeared to have been attached (engorged = longer)

STEP 3: MONITOR FOR SYMPTOMS

Watch for the following symptoms for 30 days after the bite. Not all Lyme disease presents with a rash — don't wait only for a rash to appear.

- Expanding red rash (may look like a bullseye, but not always)
- Fever, chills, fatigue, headache

- Muscle or joint aches
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Facial palsy (drooping on one side of face)
- Shortness of breath or heart palpitations

STEP 4: WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

Call your doctor promptly if any of the above symptoms appear, if the tick appeared engorged, if it was attached for more than 24 hours, or if you are in a high-risk area for Lyme disease.

- Symptoms appear within 3–30 days of bite
- Tick appeared fully or partially engorged
- Tick was attached for an unknown or extended duration
- You are immunocompromised or have other health concerns
- You live in or recently visited a Lyme-endemic region

What to Tell Your Doctor

- When you first noticed the tick
- Where on your body it was attached
- How engorged (how long it had likely been feeding)
- What symptoms you've developed and when they started
- Any recent travel to wooded or grassy areas

Symptom Log

Track daily in the two weeks following the bite:

Date	Symptoms Noted	Temperature	Severity 1-10	Notes

For detailed tick removal guidance and prevention tips, visit: projectlyme.org/ticks-prevention/