

Talking to Patients about Preventing Tick Bites

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

You know that ticks can spread serious diseases like Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, or babesiosis, but when was the last time you talked to a patient about tick bite prevention?

Welcome to CDC Audio Rounds. I'm Dr. Robert Gaynes with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Your patients who spend time outdoors, especially in brushy areas or tall grass, are at risk for getting tick bites. Hikers, campers, outdoor workers, gardeners, golfers, and children are at particular risk. Ticks can be active any time the ground temperature is 50 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. In some regions, ticks can be active year-round.

Here's how your patients can prevent tick bites:

First, tell them to wear repellent that contains at least 20 percent DEET. Parents should apply repellent to children, avoiding the hands, eyes, and mouth. People who spend a lot of time outdoors should consider wearing permethrin-treated clothing, including boots, pants, and socks. Permethrin-treated items can be purchased online or at sporting goods stores and can remain protective through repeated washings.

Second, tell your patients to check themselves and their children for ticks every day. Places that ticks frequently hide are in the ears, on the back of the neck, and in the groin area.

Third, advise them to remove clothing where ticks might be hiding, and take a shower to wash off any unseen ticks. Research has shown that showering within two hours of coming indoors can protect against Lyme disease.

Finally, tell your patients who spend time in tick habitats or find an attached tick to watch for fever and rash, and to see you if they have any symptoms or concerns.

To order or download Lyme disease informational materials for your patients, go to the Lyme disease prevention toolkit at www.cdc.gov/Lyme.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.