

## **HEALTH MATTERS**

### **TICK BORNE ILLNESSES: NOT JUST LYME DISEASE ANYMORE**

Ticks are tiny bugs most likely found in shady, damp, brushy, wooded, or grassy areas (especially in tall grass), including your own backyard. Ticks feed on the blood of mammals (including people, dogs, cats, deer, and mice), birds, and reptiles (snakes and turtles, for example).

Ticks can bite you and spread diseases like Lyme disease, babesiosis, anaplasmosis (formerly human granulocytic ehrlichiosis or HGE), tularemia, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into direct contact with them. Ticks feed on blood. They usually travel around your body for hours before finding a spot to feed.

Deer ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts. They are tiny. Because they are so small, you can't always tell easily when they are on you. The highest risk of being bitten by a deer or dog tick occurs throughout the spring, summer and into fall season.

#### **Protect Yourself**

Check yourself for ticks once a day. Favorite places ticks like to go on your body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, and neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears. Remember to check your children and pets, too. Remove any attached ticks as soon as possible.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, use a pair of fine point tweezers to grip the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull straight out with steady pressure.

Talk to your doctor if you develop a rash where you were bitten or experience symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, or sore and aching muscles.

Use bug repellents. Repellents that contain DEET can be used on your exposed skin. Permethrin is a product that can be used on your clothes. Always follow the product instructions and use repellents with no more than 30-35% DEET on adults and 10-15% DEET on children. Never use insect repellents on infants. Talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets and livestock from ticks.

For more information on tick repellents contact Department of Public Health at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov>.

#### **Prevention Begins With You**

If you have any questions about tick borne diseases please call the Health Department at 781-455-7500 ext. 511 or go to our web site <http://www.needhamma.gov>.