Tick Bite Prevention and Treatment

Tick-borne diseases can be prevented by preventing tick bites. In regions where tick exposure is likely, people should wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants cinched at the ankle or tucked into the boots or socks, and closed-toe shoes. Walking on cleared trails, away from brushy vegetation, also decreases the opportunity for tick attachment. People who are in suspected tick habitats should check their clothing frequently for ticks. If multiple ticks are seen on clothing, they are most easily removed by trapping them on a piece of cellophane tape or by rolling a sticky lint remover across them. Spraying clothes with an insect repellent may provide an additional barrier of protection from ticks. Most repellents contain diethyltoluamide (DEET), which repels but does not kill ticks. Permethrin is the active ingredient found in many aerosol spray tick repellents that are designed for use specifically on clothing. Permethrin kills ticks on contact and has a low toxicity in mammals. Field tests done by the US military have shown tick repellents containing permethrin to be 90%-100% effective in preventing tick bites. When traveling in tick-infested areas, inspect all parts of the body closely at least twice daily. Some ticks can be on the body for 1-2 hours before attaching. Even after a tick attaches, disease transmission may be prevented by prompt removal. Laboratory studies of ticks infected with the infectious agent that causes Lyme disease showed that disease was rarely transmitted if the tick was attached for less than 24 hours. Once attached, ticks are difficult to remove because ticks' mouthparts are barbed. Some species of ticks secrete a cement-like material that firmly anchors them to the skin. How to remove a tick

- The standard method for removing an embedded tick is to use rounded tweezers, grasp the tick as close as possible to the skin surface, and then pull with slow steady pressure in a direction away from the skin.

- Take care not to crush or squeeze the body of the tick, because fluid forced out of the tick may contain infectious agents.
After the tick is removed, wash the bite site with soap and water or an antiseptic. The person who removed the tick should wash his or her hands thoroughly.

It may be a good idea to save the tick in case later identification may be necessary.

Traditional methods of tick removal, such as applying fingernail polish, rubbing alcohol, or a hot match head to the tick, do not affect tick detachment. These methods also may induce the tick to salivate or regurgitate into the wound, thus transmitting more of an infectious agent.

In general, preventive antibiotics are not recommended for people without symptoms who seek medical treatment after finding and removing a tick. Clinical trials have shown that negative reactions to antibiotics outweigh the benefits of disease prevention in most cases because the chance of disease transmission is so low in this population.

For more information, read the complete article, Wilderness: Tick Bite Prevention and Treatment on http://www.emedicinehealth.com.

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