WEEK 25 PEAK TICK SEASON (JUNE) · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Ticks & Lyme Disease

A tick the size of a sesame seed bites a worker clearing brush. He doesn't notice. Weeks later there's a rash, fever, and joint pain. A tick bite is usually painless, so the danger is the one you never feel.

The hazard

Blacklegged (deer) ticks in Ontario can carry Lyme disease, and their range is spreading. A bite is often painless, so you may not know you've been bitten until symptoms turn up days or weeks later. Tall grass, brush, leaf litter, and wood piles are the hot spots — especially when you're clearing ground or working the edges.

What to do

- Keep out of tall grass, heavy brush, and deep leaf litter where you can; walk the centre of cleared paths.
- Long sleeves and long pants in brushy or grassy areas, with pants tucked into socks.
- Insect repellent with DEET or icaridin on skin and clothing.
- **Do a tick check at the end of every day** — armpits, waist, groin, behind the knees, hairline, and behind the ears. Getting one off early matters more than anything else here.

If you find a tick

- **Grasp:** fine-tipped tweezers, as close to the skin as you can get.
- **Pull:** straight up, steady, even pressure. Don't twist or squeeze the body — that can break off mouthparts or push material into the bite.
- **Clean:** wash the bite and your hands with soap and water, or rubbing alcohol.
- **Note the details:** roughly how long it was attached, and where you were working. Submit a photo to eTick.ca to get it identified and see the risk in your area — that's identification and surveillance, not a diagnosis.

Getting it looked at

Don't work off a single number. Whether preventive antibiotics are appropriate depends on several things together — how quickly the tick can be removed and assessed, whether you were in a higher-risk area, roughly how long it was attached, and your own medical history. **A pharmacist or clinician can assess that; get seen promptly rather than waiting to see what happens.** Take what you know: where you were, how long it was on, and the photo.

Then keep watching for about a month:

- **An expanding rash.** It may or may not look like the classic bull's-eye — plenty don't. A spreading rash around the bite is worth a call either way.
- **Flu-like illness** days or weeks later: aches, fatigue, fever, chills, headache, joint pain. Go in, and **say you had a tick bite**, when, and where — that changes what they look for.
- **A bite that looks infected** — discharge, spreading redness, growing pain.

Tickborne illness is treatable, and treated earlier tends to go better — which is the reason to get assessed rather than wait.

Talk it over

- Where's the tall grass, brush, and leaf litter on this site, and who's working in it this week?
- What's your plan for the end-of-day tick check — and would you know who to call the same day if you found one attached?

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