

There are many important points about how you can prevent lyme disease. For a good summary go to:<http://www.tompkins-co.org/health/summer/lyme-faq.htm>

However, one point that is frequently overlooked is the Total Body Tick Check. It is THE most important step you can take. Here is how you do it:

First, Check your body for ticks. The "deer" tick requires 36 hours or more to transmit the bacteria of lyme disease into your body. This is your "Golden Window of Opportunity" to remove the rascal before it causes harm. Every day that you have been out of the house into your yard, the woods, the park - any place ticks may be - check yourself. If you have a dog or cat that goes out doors and may therefore bring a tick into your home - check yourself every day. The total body check done every day will insure that any tick found has been on your body less than 36 hours and, therefore, has not been there enough time to infect you.

Second, Don't be shy about your total body tick checks. This is no time for modesty. Ticks like to latch on anywhere and we mean anywhere - sometimes quite private anywheres! So, check from head to toe and in all the private crevices you possess. We have found ticks in arm pits, on backs and backsides, on genitalia and on thighs - just to name a few places.

Third, don't rely on seeing them. Feel for them. Use your hand to feel all your skin surface - everywhere. If you feel a little bump the size of a sesame seed - it may be a tick! Get a look at it and if it is a tick remove it right away. Especially use your hand to feel where you cannot see... your back and backside etc. The biggest problem area is your upper back where your hand cannot get to (your acnestis -The part of an animal's skin that it cannot reach to scratch itself). There you will have to make do with mirrors or recruit a buddy.

Fourth, remove them - to see how to do so go to our website for the details:<http://www.tompkins-co.org/health/summer/lyme-faq.htm> . But briefly you use a pair of tweezers to grasp the tick by the head (right where it has latched onto your skin) and gently but firmly exert a pull away from the skin until it lets go. Try not to jerk it off which is more likely to break it. Your goal is to remove all of it.

Fifth, if you have children - you will have to do this for them until they are old enough to be reliable and able to do it for themselves.

Bottom line: if you Check your Body and remove ticks before 36 hours are up you will not have to worry about lyme disease and you won't need preventive treatment. So, start those body checks today!

William Klepack, MD
Medical Director
Tompkins County Health Department
55 Brown Road
Ithaca, N.Y. 14851
phone 607-274-6674
fax 607-274-6680