

SAFE WORKING PROCEDURE

TASK	Tick Bites and Lyme Disease
REF NO.	SWP 49
MINIMUM NUMBER OF STAFF/VOLUNTEERS	
1	
MINIMUM QUALIFICATION/TRAINING	
Staff/volunteers should be familiar with this SWP and the risk assessment for Lyme Disease	
PPE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long trousers tucked into socks • Long sleeved top • Clothing ideally of light colour 	
TOOLS/EQUIPMENT/INFORMATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tick removal tool or tweezers • First Aid Kit 	
PRIOR TO TASK	
<p>Consider the likelihood of tick bites (and thus Lyme Disease) as part of your task risk assessment and communicate the risk to all those involved in the task.</p> <p>Ticks are usually found in long grass and other low growing plants such as bracken as well as leaf litter. They are most common in woodland, grassland and damp heathland, but can be found in other habitats. Ticks are most abundant in spring and early summer and again in early autumn. However, they can be active all year round in milder weather (above 3.5°C).</p>	
DURING TASK	
<p>1. Examine clothing for signs of ticks during task and increase precautions if any are discovered. (For action if tick is found on skin see 'Further Information' below)</p>	
ON COMPLETION OF TASK	
<p>1. On completing the task, inspect and brush down clothing to remove any possible ticks before leaving site.</p> <p>2. On arriving home, take a bath or shower and inspect body for ticks. Ticks favour warm, moist areas of the body where the blood flows close to the skin – such as the armpits, groin and the scalp (For action if tick is found on skin see 'Further Information' below)</p>	
FURTHER INFORMATION	
<p>What causes Lyme disease?</p> <p>Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium (<i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i>) and is spread to humans by the bite of the common tick (<i>Ixodes ricinus</i>). The tick feeds on blood at each stage of its life cycle and when feeding can pass on the bacteria to its host. Between stages ticks leave their host, mature to the next stage of their development and then wait for their next host by clinging to long vegetation such as grass or bracken.</p>	

The risk of infection from an infected tick attached for 24 hours or less is very low. Early detection and removal of ticks is important in reducing the risk of infection. The tick nymph is the most common form of transmission to humans, because its small size makes it harder to spot and early removal is therefore less likely. Adult ticks are more likely to have become carriers,



but are easier to spot and there is a greater chance they will be spotted and removed.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Lyme disease can affect any part of the body and cause many different symptoms. The commonest symptoms relate to the person feeling unwell, having flu-like symptoms, i.e. tiredness, muscle pain, muscle weakness, joint pain and headache. In some cases, a characteristically shaped, expanding 'bull's eye' rash appears on the skin (see below). If left untreated Lyme disease can lead to more serious complications.



What to do if bitten by a tick

Remove the tick as soon as possible ideally using a tick removal tool. If this is not available use a pair of narrow tweezers. Grip the head of the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull steadily upwards. Avoid squeezing the body of the tick.

Never try to burn off, scratch off or squash a tick. This can cause it to regurgitate its blood meal which may increase the risk of infection. Do not try to pull the tick out using your fingers. This may squash it, but also may result in infected mouth parts being left behind in the skin.

Do not handle the tick with bare hands at any stage as this can lead to infection.

Disinfect the site of the bite.

Make a record of the fact you were bitten and the date.

Make sure you are aware of the symptoms of Lyme disease. Consult your doctor immediately if you suffer any of these and make him/her aware that you have been bitten by a tick. Early treatment with antibiotics is very effective against Lyme disease.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/lyme-disease.pdf>

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