

10 Tips to Avoid Tick Bites

Finding an engorged tick on your body is never fun. Ticks do carry diseases, which might make you think twice about your next hike into the woods. You don't have to avoid the outdoors, though. Your first line of defense is avoiding their bites. Follow these 10 tips to avoid ticks, and more importantly, tick bites, when you head outdoors.

1. **Use a product with 20% DEET or higher on both skin and clothing.** Carefully apply the repellent by hand to your face, neck, and ears – you don't want DEET in your eyes or mouth! Adults should apply DEET products to young children. You may need to reapply DEET products after several hours.
2. **Apply permethrin to clothing, hiking boots, tents, and camp chairs.** Permethrin products should never be used on skin. It remains effective on clothing through several washings. Permethrin is sold under the names Permanone and Duranon.
3. **Wear light-colored clothing.** You'll have a better chance of seeing a dark tick crawling on you *before* it makes its way to your skin.
4. **Wear long pants with sneakers or hiking boots.** Tuck your pant legs into your socks, and keep your shirt tucked into your waistband. In areas where ticks are abundant, you might even want to wrap some duct tape around your ankles, over the top of your socks. You'll look ridiculous, but it works.
5. **Outfit yourself in bug repellent apparel.** Want a sporty, outdoor look with built-in tick protection? Ex-Officio sells a line of clothing that is pretreated with permethrin. The treatment lasts through up to 70 washings.
6. **Stay on the trail.** Ticks hang out in high vegetation, waiting for a passing host. When your leg brushes through the vegetation, the tick transfers to your body. Walk on designated trails, and avoid blazing your own through meadows or other high vegetation areas. You'll avoid ticks *and* leave a minimal impact on the wild places we love.
7. **Avoid tick-infested places.** In some places, ticks may be too abundant to avoid, even with the best repellents and long pants. If you venture a few feet into a wooded area or field and find your legs covered with ticks, turn around.
8. **Be vigilant – do a daily tick check.** Strip down and search all those places that ticks love to hide: in your hair, under your arms, between your legs, behind the knees, and even in your belly button.
9. **Put your clothes in the dryer, and tumble them on high heat.** Research shows many ticks can make it through the washing machine, even when you wash in hot water. Most ticks will die during a cycle in the hot, dry air of your clothes dryer, though.
10. **Check your pets and your kids before letting them loose in the house.** Ticks can easily drop off on carpets or furniture, where they will wait for a bloodmeal to come along. Give Fido's fur a check, and make Junior remove clothing and do a tick check.