

# TICKS

Ticks can transmit two serious diseases, **Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever**. We want you to be aware of symptoms to watch for. Ticks may cause a local infection at the site of attachment.

**Lyme disease** is a bacterial illness that some people get after being bitten by ticks, which are infected with the organism *Borrelia burgdorferi*. In most people the first symptom of Lyme disease is a skin lesion called erythema migrans or “bull’s eye” rash – a red bump that expands to form a large red ring, with partial central clearing at the site of a recent tick bite. The “bull’s eye” can vary in size and shape and appear anywhere from 3 to 32 days after being bitten by an infected tick. Fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle and joint pain, and swollen lymph nodes may occur as the illness progresses. If the early disease is left untreated, weeks and months after the tick bite other problems may develop involving joints, eyes, and the cardiac and nervous system. Treatment includes antibiotics and supportive measures.

**Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever** is a systemic, febrile disease caused by the parasite *Rickettsia rickettsii*. It has a characteristic petechial (small pinhead bruises) rash usually occurring before the sixth day, resulting from a bite of a dog tick infected with the bacteria. The rash begins on the wrists and ankles and spreads to the trunk and other areas of the body within hours. The palms and soles are typically involved. High fever, chills, headache, and muscle pain usually appear 3 to 10 days after the tick bite. In some cases, the rash fails to develop or develops only late in the illness. Multisystem involvement, shock and death can occur if untreated. Diagnosis is made by history and physical examination findings. It is confirmed by laboratory tests. Treatment is with antibiotics and supportive measures.