

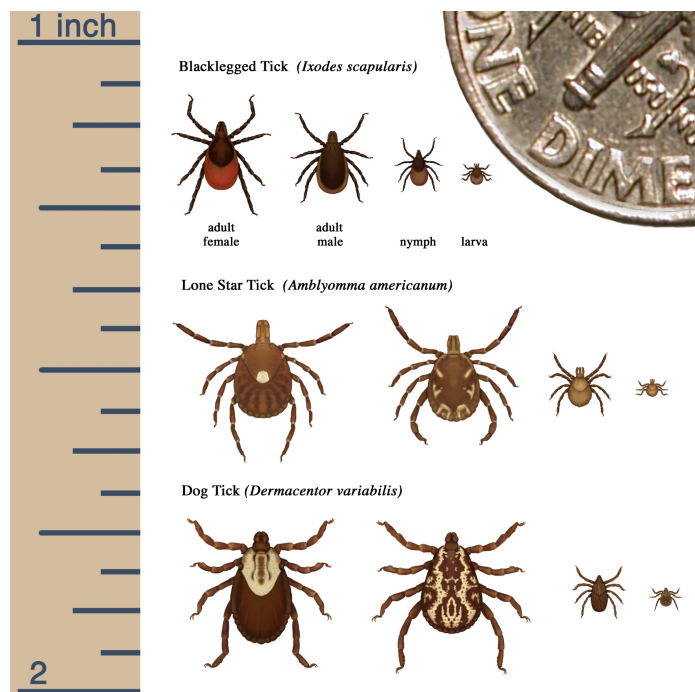
Ticks are commonplace in Maine. Awareness and knowledge about ticks should be taken seriously, even for visitors. I have made this collection of information and resources to help you feel equipped while you explore this beautiful state.

This is far from professional advice, I am sharing my personal research and opinions.

Ticks are parasites. Ticks utilize multiple hosts during their lifecycle. Often we picture deer, but small rodents also play a role. The black-legged tick carries lyme disease. Black-legged ticks can be found as larva, nymph, adult male and adult female. It is helpful to understand their lifecycle to understand your risk.

Adult black-legged ticks are most common April-June, October-December. Nymph black-legged ticks are most active May-July.

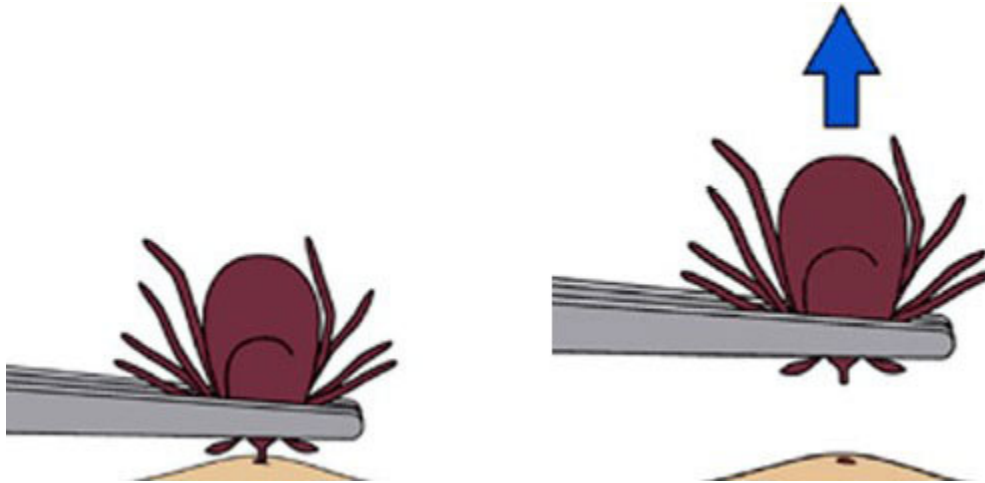
Dog ticks and lone star ticks are also threats for other tick-borne illnesses.



Everyday you should check for ticks. A tick check involves inspecting every square inch of your body. It is best to do this in good lighting and a mirror helps too. You will be looking for adult ticks, but also nymph ticks or larva. They could be crawling on you, on your clothes or you may have a tick bite.

Ticks like to hide in dark damp areas. Think about where you are sweating, where clothes start/stop or where clothes bunch up. Behind ears and knees, ankles, hairline, pantline are all common places. You can feel your skin to help find ticks, but nymph ticks the size of poppy seeds will not be easily felt.

When you have a tick bite, you can use tweezers to remove the tick. Line up the tweezers with the base of the head, getting as close to your skin as possible while having the tweezers span the entire head. Sometimes when you remove a tick, the head stays in your body. It is best to let it be, don't try and pick the head out. There may be a small red dot where you removed the tick, you can monitor the bite to make sure it doesn't become infected.



You can observe your tick to guess how long it has been attached to you. Just because the head is buried into your skin doesn't necessarily mean it has been attached for a long time. There are different stages of engorgement that may be more of an indicator. A white/silver/green-gray color and round/fat tick are signs of engorgement.

Ticks may be alive or dead when you remove them. In order to kill a tick you have to cut it in half, burn it, or drop it in a glass of rubbing alcohol. You may choose to keep the tick in a plastic baggie. You can test your tick at <https://extension.umaine.edu/ticks/> to see if it was carrying lyme disease or other tick borne illnesses. In Maine, I believe over half of black-legged ticks test positive for lyme.

It takes ~36 hours for a tick to transmit lyme disease. Daily checks are your best prevention. You can take a prophylactic dose of 200 mg doxycycline within 72 hours of your tick bite to help prevent lyme disease. Doing this a few times a summer is okay.

Lyme disease symptoms vary. For younger or healthy individuals, it may be obvious that something is off with you. For older folks, the symptoms may be harder to pinpoint. Body aches, headaches, muscle pain, fatigue or a flu-like ache are all symptoms. A common symptom is a bulls-eye rash. This can be ANYWHERE on your body, not just where you pulled the tick from. Not everyone gets a rash. Later symptoms may include lyme arthritis which can be hot, red swelling joints.

NorDx Antibody is the first test, followed by Nordx Western Bolt from what I have heard. Testing can be complicated as the disease hides and moves around in your body. Testing when you

aren't experiencing symptoms won't likely be a true picture if you have lyme. I have heard there is a testing area in Portland Maine that would be more affordable than going through your doctor. I believe this is their number - 207.396.7835. This would be self-pay, but I believe the test is around \$50.

Daily tick checks are the most effective way to prevent lyme disease. Here are a few other tips that may also help:

- Do not cuddle indoor/outdoor animals during Spring, Summer, Fall. Don't let them sleep on your bed or lay on furniture.
- Tuck your shirts in, tuck your socks over your pants.
- Wear light colored clothing so you can spot the ticks.
- Wear head coverings.
- Utilize bug spray. Deet and lemon eucalyptus oil are effective. You can buy permethrin-treated clothes or use permethrin as a spray. Permethrin is highly TOXIC to cats.