

Warmer Weather + Sunny Days = Ticks and Mosquitoes

Fight the Bite to Avoid Illness

Summertime is a wonderful time of year in North Carolina, but with the warm weather come pesky ticks and mosquitoes.

Ticks and mosquitoes are more than just nuisances. Some carry germs that can make people seriously ill.

“There are simple, easy ways to ‘Fight the Bite’ while enjoying the outdoors this summer,” said Karen Lachapelle, Edgecombe County Health Director. “While outdoors, reduce your chance of bites by covering as much of your skin as possible by wearing long sleeves and pants. At home, you can take a few simple steps to make your yard less tick- and mosquito-friendly.”

Lachapelle advises homeowners to mow their lawns often to keep grass short and empty or remove containers that hold water to prevent mosquito breeding grounds. Keep playground equipment away from yard edges and out from under trees. To prevent ticks, clear brush and leaf litter under trees, and remove plants that attract wild animals such as deer and rodents. Remember to make sure your pets are treated for ticks.

The CDC recommends several repellents against mosquitoes including: DEET, picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. Most repellents are safe for use on children 2 months of age and up, except lemon oil of lemon eucalyptus, which should not be used on children under the age of 3. Don't allow children to apply repellents themselves, and only use a small amount.

In addition, clothing may be treated with permethrin to repel and kill ticks and mosquitoes. Be sure to follow the label directions when applying repellents.

Removing Ticks

Proper and prompt removal of ticks is the key to preventing infection. Use fine-tipped tweezers to remove ticks, getting as close to your skin as possible and pulling steadily upward without twisting the tick. Note the date you removed the tick. If you become ill within three weeks, be sure to tell your physician you were bitten.

Other tips regarding ticks and tick removal include:

- Check yourself and your children often when outdoors and quickly remove any ticks. Pay particular attention to the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and the groin, which are favorite places for ticks to attach.
- Do not use matches, hot nails or Vaseline® for tick removal. They will not make a tick let go and may cause the tick to release diseased bacteria into the bitten area.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.

Consult your doctor if you become ill after a tick bite. Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever may include sudden onset of fever, headache and muscle pain, followed by development of a rash. Symptoms of Lyme disease may include a "bull's-eye" rash accompanied by nonspecific symptoms such as fever, malaise, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and joint aches.

For additional information on mosquitoes and ticks, visit the following websites:

www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/prevent-mosquito-bites.html, www.cdc.gov/ticks/, or call the Edgecombe County Health Department @ 252-641-7511.

###