



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

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Health Officials Advise Precautions to Avoid Ticks

Fight Ticks with Four Simple Steps: Protect, Check, Remove and Watch

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 24, 2019) – With the arrival of warmer weather and tick season underway in Kentucky, officials with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) are reminding people to take precautions against tick bites, which can transmit serious and potentially deadly illnesses.

“Spring and early summer are peak times for tick bites, which coincide with people venturing outdoors in the warmer weather,” said Jeff D. Howard, Jr., DPH Commissioner. “It’s important that people take preventive measures against tick bites and also check for ticks after visiting affected areas.” We encourage everyone to remember these four steps of **Protect, Check, Remove** and **Watch** to protect themselves and others from tick bites.

1. **Protect** – Protect yourself from tick bites by avoiding areas where ticks live, such as wooded and brushy areas, tall grasses, woodpiles, leaf litter, and areas close to the ground. Take action to decrease your risk of infection by wearing an EPA-registered tick repellent containing at least 20% DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or one with lemon eucalyptus. When possible, wear protective clothing (light colored, long

sleeved shirts and pants tucked into socks) when outdoors to keep ticks off your body. Remember to pretreat clothing with Permethrin, a commonly used insecticide that is safe around many animals, but is highly toxic to cats. Be sure to keep any sprayed items away from cats. If you have pets, talk to your veterinarian about the use of tick prevention treatments.

2. **Check** – Check yourself and others for ticks after spending time outdoors. Be sure to check your entire body for ticks using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas. Parents should check children for ticks. Check under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in and around the hair. In addition, check your pets for ticks. Be sure to check your gear for ticks because ticks can hitchhike inside clothing where they are not readily visible. If possible, change your clothes and shower immediately after spending time outdoors. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If clothes require washing, hot water is recommended to kill ticks effectively.
3. **Remove** – Remove any imbedded ticks as soon as possible. Use tweezers to grab the tick close to the skin and gently pull on the tick with steady pressure. Do not jerk or twist the tick. Wash your hands and the bite site with soap and water after the tick is removed. Apply an antiseptic to the bite site. Do not use alcohol, matches, liquid soap or petroleum jelly to remove a tick. Dispose of a tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.
4. **Watch** – Watch for any symptoms of tickborne illness, which can vary among individuals and differ according to the disease. A sudden fever and rash, severe headache, muscle or joint aches, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea can be signs of tickborne illness. If symptoms arise within several weeks of removing a tick, consult your healthcare professional and tell them about your recent tick bite, when it occurred, and where you most likely acquired the tick.

To help raise awareness about tick prevention, DPH collaborated with the Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) and Northern Kentucky Health Department (NKHD) to host a 2019 Tick Poster Disease Prevention Contest. In February 2019, DPH invited

school-age children across the commonwealth to create and submit original artwork regarding tick borne disease prevention. Submissions had to include at least one of the following prevention methods: Be aware of ticks when in or near brushy areas, check yourself for ticks least once a day, remove ticks as soon as possible, or use an EPA-approved repellent (DEET, permethrin, picardin or lemon eucalyptus). With over 700 submissions received, the judges had to make very difficult decisions as to the winners. Overall, a winner from each grade was selected (Kindergarten-8th grade), as well as three top overall winners and two winners from a drawing that included all participants. NKHD purchased gift cards for the cash prizes. Winners had their artwork displayed at the annual KPHA conference held in Northern Kentucky. Each winner was also awarded a certificate signed by the DPH Commissioner Dr. Jeff Howard. Winning posters can be viewed at:

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/idb/Documents/2019TBDBPosterContestWinners.pdf>

In another effort to identify tickborne illness, DPH has collaborated with the University of Kentucky Entomology Program to establish the 2019 Veterinarian Tick Submission program. The program, which began in February 2019, allows Kentucky Veterinarians to submit ticks for identification and testing. For more information in participating in the Veterinarian Tick Surveillance Program please contact the Program Manager:

tori.amburgey@ky.gov or the State Public Health Veterinarian: kelly.giesbrecht@ky.gov.

For more information on ticks and tickborne illness visit <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.

