

## Public Health

May 2019

### RE: Enjoy the outdoors – and check for ticks!

Dear Principals, Staff, Parents, Guardians and Students:

It's a great time of year to enjoy the outdoors – physical activity, fresh air and time with family and friends is so important! With being outside more, we also need to be aware of ticks. These are small insects – sometimes as small as the period at the end of this sentence – that are found across Nova Scotia.

Tick checks help protect us from the germs that ticks can carry. Removing ticks as soon as possible can prevent or reduce the risk of infection. Follow these steps to help protect against ticks, especially in grassy, wooded or shrub covered areas:

- Apply insect repellents containing DEET or Icaridin to exposed skin and clothes. Follow directions on the package carefully.
- Wear light colored long sleeved shirts and pants, closed-toed shoes, and tuck shirts into pants and pant legs into socks.
- Keep lawns mowed short.
- Put playground equipment in sunny, dry places away from wooded areas, yard edges, and trees.
- Check your whole body for ticks and, when possible, take a bath or shower within two hours of coming indoors. This makes it easier to find ticks and washes away loose ones.
- If you find ticks, here's how to remove them safely:
  - Carefully grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
  - Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.
  - Clean and disinfect the site with soap and water, rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.
  - Dispose of the tick in a sealed plastic bag and put in the garbage.
  - Do NOT burn, squeeze or coax a tick's mouthparts from your skin using other methods.

Only the blacklegged tick can transmit the germ that causes Lyme disease, and only after being attached for at least 24 – 36 hours. One of the earliest and most common symptoms of Lyme disease is a rash that's often shaped like a bull's-eye. The rash occurs on the same site as the bite. Other symptoms include fever, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain and headaches. If you've been exploring outdoors, especially in wooded areas, forests, areas where tall grasses and or shrubs are present, or have found a tick on your body, and show these symptoms, see a healthcare provider.

To learn more about tick safety, visit <https://novascotia.ca/ticksafety/> or call your local Public Health office at 902-893-5820.



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