

Overview of Tickborne Diseases

Ticks are tiny bugs most likely found in shady, damp, brushy, wooded, or grassy areas (especially in tall grass), including your own backyard.

Ticks feed on the blood of mammals (including people, dogs, cats, deer, and mice), birds, and reptiles (snakes and turtles, for example). Ticks can bite you and spread diseases like Lyme disease, babesiosis, anaplasmosis (formerly human granulocytic ehrlichiosis or HGE), tularemia, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into **direct contact** with them. In the photo below, an adult deer tick waits to attach to an animal or person that comes into direct contact with it.



Deer ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts. They are tiny. In the photos below, ticks are shown next to a postage stamp and a finger tip, to give an idea of the size of the ticks. Because they are so small, you can't always tell easily when they are on you.



Adult Female Deer Tick

Deer ticks are responsible for causing Lyme disease, babesiosis and anaplasmosis (formerly human granulocytic ehrlichiosis or HGE). Both nymph (young) and adult deer ticks will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a deer tick occurs throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons. However, adults can also be out searching for a host any time winter temperatures are above freezing. Deer tick nymphs are the size of a poppy seed and deer tick adults are the size of a sesame seed.



Adult Female Dog Tick

Dog ticks are responsible for causing Rocky Mountain spotted fever and certain

types of tularemia. In general, only the adult dog tick will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a dog tick occurs during the spring and summer seasons. Adult dog ticks are about the size of a watermelon seed.

In the photo below are two ticks: an adult deer tick and adult dog tick. Can you tell which is which?



Ticks feed on blood. They usually travel around your body for hours before finding a spot to feed. Shown in the photo below: a tick that is engorged with (filled up with) blood (right), and a tick that is not engorged with blood. The tick that is engorged has been attached for many hours. Try to find ticks and remove them before they attach and become engorged with your blood.



This information is provided by [Epidemiology Program](#) within the [Department of Public Health](#).