

## **Did You Know That There are effective measures to help reduce personal exposure to ticks.**

**The public health response to the growing Lyme disease and tick-borne disease epidemic has focused on protective measures to reduce personal exposure to the ticks that transmit the disease to humans. Shelter Island's Deer and Tick Committee is committed to lowering tick density levels on our island and believes that responsible individual measures will also go a long way to minimizing the incidence of tick-borne diseases.**

**Thorough daily body checks for ticks, the wearing of protective clothing when outdoors and using tick repellants can be effective for individual protection. Ticks and their primary hosts from which they contract the pathogens which cause the diseases, namely white-footed mice, chipmunks and other small mammals, need moisture, a place away from direct sun light and a place to hide. The cleaner you keep the area around the house, the less likely your chances of being bitten by a tick. Surveys show that many homeowners follow the recommendations below, as well as undertaking landscape modifications such as creating a woodchip or gravel barrier around yards. Although it may not be possible to create a totally tick-free zone, taking the following precautions will greatly reduce the tick population in your yard.**

- **Keep grass mowed.**
- **Remove leaf litter, brush and weeds at the edge of the lawn.**
- **Restrict the use of groundcover, such as pachysandra in areas frequented by family and roaming pets.**
- **Remove brush and leaves around stonewalls and wood piles.**
- **Discourage rodent activity. Clean up and seal stonewalls and small openings around the home.**
- **Manage pet activity; keep dogs and cats out of the woods to reduce the possibility of ticks being brought into the home.**
- **Use plantings that do not attract deer.**
- **Move children's swing sets and sand boxes away from woodland edge and place them on a wood chip or mulch type foundation.**
- **Trim tree branches and shrubs around the lawn edge to let in more sunlight.**
- **Adopt dryer or less water-demanding landscaping techniques with gravel pathways and mulches.**
- **Widen woodland trails.**

**Also, here are additional measures that you and your family can take in order to better protect yourself from tick bites. This is especially important if you enjoy hiking, camping, hunting, working, or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you can still protect yourself:**

- **Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.**
- **Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.**
- **Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors and check again once indoors.**
- **Consider using insect repellent. Follow label directions.**
- **Stay on clearly marked trails. Avoid contacting vegetation.**
- **Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.**
- **Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.**

**If you find a tick attached to you or your child don't panic. Remember, not all ticks are infected, and your risk of acquiring Lyme disease or other tick-borne diseases is greatly reduced if the tick is removed within the first 24-36 hours after attachment. To remove a tick promptly and properly, follow the guidelines listed here:**

- **Using tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.**
- **Gently pull the tick in a steady, upward motion.**
- **Wash the area with disinfectant.**
- **When trying to remove the tick:  
DO NOT touch the tick with your bare hands.  
DO NOT squeeze the body of the tick as this may increase your risk of infection.**

**DO NOT put alcohol, nail polish remover or Vaseline on the tick.**

**DO NOT put a hot match or cigarette on the tick in an effort to make it “back out.”**

**DO NOT use your fingers to remove the tick.**

**While removing the tick, if the tick’s mouthparts break off and remain in the skin, don’t worry. The mouthparts alone cannot transmit Lyme disease or other tick-borne diseases, because the infective body of the tick is no longer attached. After cleaning the area, watch the site of the bite for appearance of a rash 3 to 30 days after the bite. If you develop this type of rash or flu-like symptoms or other related medical concerns, contact your health care provider immediately.**

**Ref: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2825>**

**New York State’s Department of Health – July 2011**

**(revised)**